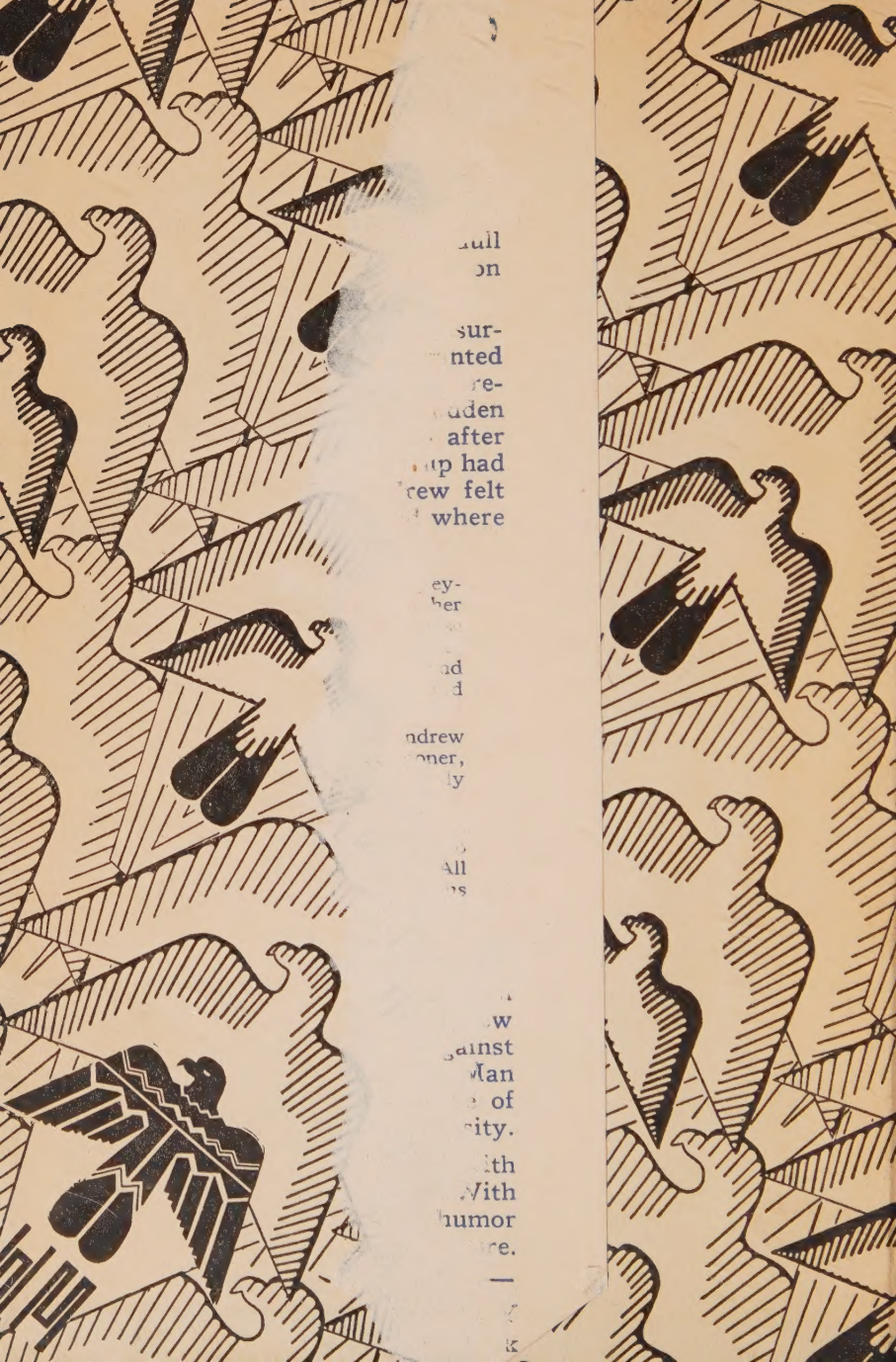
FLAG IN THE WIND

ALFRED STANFORD



Flag in
the Wind

Books by Alfred Stanford

THE GROUND SWELL
A CITY OUT OF THE SEA
NAVIGATOR
INVITATION TO DANGER
FLAG IN THE WIND

Flag in the Wind

by

Alfred Stanford

1930

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BY ALFRED STANFORD

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the Wind

I

IN one man it is fertile valleys, and the soil. In another it is the mountains. Some men seek the prairie or the desert. These places to live exert a powerful pull, they instill a drive in man he must look far to equal. Blood, after all, seeks its own level. With Andrew, it was the ocean.

Sometimes this drive in Andrew to seek the ocean was quiescent and hidden. At other times it rose in his thin body in a tide of passionate longing.

Andrew was a Brooklyn boy—he pronounced girl as if it were goil, and oil as if it were erl.

He lived in a rooming house in Flatbush, in one of the numberless respectable brown stone fronts with iron railings that have departed from antique New York, but still cluster in parts of the more provincial borough.

Andrew had a good job. He worked as loss clerk in the marine insurance office of Symes & Shinhosler, in an old brick building down the crooked lane of South William Street, in lower Manhattan. And for all his thirty years, he liked to talk tough.

Andy came by his last name in an odd way. His father was rumored to have been a nomadic pug, and his mother's profession was uncertain. At any rate, very early in his life, he had been left on the steps of the St. Joseph Orphanage. When he was ten years old, the time was near when he must venture out into

the world and look for a job. At this time it was the fashion among the sporty youth of the city to have a special kind of hair-cut, a bristled pompadour. But in the Home, of course, no such fashion prevailed. There was just the simple hair-cut. When the boys in the Home took their jobs outside, they were referred to as the Johnny Out'ns. Of course, one of their first acts of independence was to have a proper hair-cut, and it was only a matter of time when the bristled pompadour became known as the Johnny Out'n cut.

As soon as Andy was released with a hooded sister to escort him to the first day's work, he borrowed a quarter and had a proper hair-cut, so strong in him was the love of freedom. He became Andrew Outen, and signed his name with a flourish on every scrap of paper he could find, and on a few walls.

In those days also he worked for Symes & Shinhosler. Except for his two voyages, that he made about the time of the World War, it was the only job he had ever had.

At first there was a thrill in working in the office. He had a small desk, and made deliveries to other offices, he kept track of the stamps, and sealed up the mail at night. Each night as he footed his total of stamps, he signed his name opposite with a bold sweep. Andrew Outen!

It was fine to have a name like that. Perhaps some day people would come in the office door, way down in the front, by the railing, and ask if they might see Mr. Outen!

Then, insidiously, disillusion set in. Andy heard of other boys who made more money than he did. He slowly reached the conviction that was to be firm and lasting—a conviction so many a lowly employee forms about his business—that it was a poor business to be in. Marine insurance paid badly.

But then, with time, there came new things that were sweet and pleasant. In the summer some of the old boys from the Home rented a bungalow at Coney Island, and Andy went to live with them in July and August. Except for the people and the dirty papers they left on the sand, it wasn't bad. He liked living down there on the beach. An hour or so out on the trolley, and they all were in bathing suits. Each suit had a big "F" on it. The "F" stood for the name of the club. The Fighters. They called it the Fighters because in the winter they all used to go to the fights together. And then, some of the boys were going to become fighters. They were always going to it with the gloves, and wrestling with each other in the sand.

It was best down there at the Island early in the morning. The sun used to wake Andrew up early, coming in the window of the room where they all slept. He'd wake up and look at the pictures pasted up on the wall just the way they had pictures pasted on the wall at the Home. Only at the Home there were saints and in the bungalow there were stage queens in tights and heroes of the ring. Andy would go out on the sand in his bare feet, and feel how cold and wet it was. Then he would look at the water and remember the waves

had been breaking all night. They had been breaking all night just the same way, while he had been sleeping.

Maybe there'd be a ship coming into New York. Far out, a thin wisp of smoke trailed up into the mist to show where she was. Or a ship outward bound—going to a strange place. Andy heard the names of these distant ports when people called up for insurance and the clerk repeated the name back over the phone.

The winter seemed to last forever when it came. All through the winter Andy used to wish and wish for summer days when he would be back on the beach in the early morning. Only when there was a big snowstorm did Andy forget his longing to be back on the beach in summer. Only then did he enjoy the winter. He liked snow, and it made him happy to see it fall. He was excited whenever the sky began to cloud up into snow-gray.

In New York sometimes the sky becomes gray two days before the snow starts. While the sky was getting ready, Andy would go about deliveries on "the street," whistling to himself, and glancing up between the big buildings to see how it was coming on.

When the snow started to fall! The first flakes! He would go a block out of his way on every trip to another office just to pass a building where there was a big thermometer. Then he could tell whether it was cold enough for a real storm. He liked to read in the papers when the storm was over how "cars were tied up—the city's traffic paralyzed." Andy liked those stories better than murder stories, ball games or fights.

But between the snow storms Andrew was always looking forward to summer on the beach, to the ocean at night, to the early morning, to slipping out on the beach all alone to see the stars go out one by one.

Best of all, Andy liked the storms there at the beach. When the wind came up and howled over the waves and sent them pounding up the shore, angry and full of sand and sticks. He could sit hunched up for hours watching that. It seemed at those times he had a kind of company that he never got from his friends. It seemed as if he knew a great many secrets all at once, that nobody else ever knew.

He could never tell anybody else about those times. The experience was something sacred. He'd always get off by himself when there was a storm.

Meanwhile the work at the office went on. Several times Mr. Shinhosler himself asked Andy to do special errands. Andy always used to take his collars to the laundry. After a while the office manager gave him money to buy the stamps. Every night he would weigh the heavy letters. Then he wrote down in a book just like the ones the clerks used, the name of each person to whom a letter had been mailed, and the number of stamps he put on it. He kept the stamp book very neatly, and always wrote in ink. He was particularly proud of the way he wrote the figure "2." It was swift and angular like a check mark. Any one would easily think a bookkeeper had made it.

His most important duty was the delivery of insurance certificates to the brokers and to the banks. Now

and again he was entrusted with a yellow envelope that contained a loss draft. He was given the duty of buying pencils, and keeping the clerks supplied with them. He bought paste at the stationery store when it was needed, and ink, and pens.

When Andy was about sixteen, he began to take a place at the counter when one of the underwriters was sick or away on vacation. There, he would sign pass books for routine shipments. The boys who brought in these pass books from the brokers' offices began to call him "Mr." Outen. He was more pleased with that, and with any evidence of Mr. Shinhosler's interest in his progress, than he was in the small increases that came once in a while in his pay envelope.

Finally one of the loss adjusters had a vacancy in his department. He was always a very strict man with the people under him. He liked Andy because Andy was always accurate and Andy could always be depended on for correct information about a declaration or a master's protest. Furthermore, this man used a very sharp pencil. Andy saw to it that there were always several on his desk. The adjuster's nails were always clean, and he used a tonic on his bald head that smelled very sweet when you came close to his desk to tell him something.

Andy was glad indeed to go into his department when the adjuster spoke of it. He began to think that marine insurance had its rewards, even if it was poorly paid. Another boy from the Home was in the department

too, a member of the club, Tony. So Andy was doubly glad to be there.

The work was interesting from the start, not only because he had a desk and a ledger in which to enter figures, but because sometimes he would read out loud copies of master's protests to McGregor, the adjuster, to determine whether they compared in all particulars with the originals. It was always interesting to read of wrecks, and heavy weather, and fires at sea. Sometimes the masters of vessels that had been stranded or sunk, or maybe in collision, would come into the office to talk to McGregor, and Andy could hear what they said.

They were mostly Norwegian captains, it seemed, big blond fellows, with heavy hands and little creases showing about their slow blue eyes. From where he sat Andy could see their backs, and as they leaned forword in talk, the seams of their faded blue serge coats would spread a bit, and show a deeper blue. They were weatherbeaten and romantic, these Scandinavians. The American masters were fewer, and the English hardly at all.

What did Andy care if another boy told him he was getting five dollars a week more than he! Surely captains did not visit him.

This was the way Andy felt about the business until the War. He would work earnestly and one day surely he would be as wealthy as Shinhosler, and own a great white yacht, with a club flag at her foremast and an owner's private signal on the main. There would be a

little blue flag to run up to the trucks when the owner was ashore and a white flag when he was at dinner.

When he was an office boy and opened the mail each morning on Mr. Shinhosler's desk, Andrew looked long and deeply at the picture of his steam yacht, the *Drucilla*. One night he stealthily opened the gilt-edged yacht club book, and read all the regulations.

Andrew used to stay every night for a long time after he discovered that book, until he knew by heart all the many formalities of yachting. How the owner always used the starboard side, and when flags were to be flown from the starboard dinghy. He learned about lights on the end of the dinghy boom of a yacht at anchor in a harbor at night. He knew the blue commodore's flag from the red of the vice-commodore.

One summer over the doorway of the bungalow he rigged a mast and yardarm for the ensign and the club pennant. At sunset every night he took the flags in until he found that the other boys thought it quite a joke. Until then, it was fun sometimes to walk the narrow porch of the bungalow at night, and look off at the ocean and fancy it was a ship's deck he walked. Andy even borrowed a lantern, to keep burning on the porch all night. He gave the excuse to the fellows that it was to divert the mosquitoes from the bedroom. But he could see the lantern all the while he lay in bed, and hear the murmur of the ocean.

The streets were dug up for water pipes soon after this, and he borrowed a red lantern from one of the ditches. This he set on the left side of the porch to

serve as the port sidelight. He looked with envy at the green lanterns at the end of the elevated trains, and wanted to steal one of these. But he never had the opportunity or the daring to add the green starboard light to the porch.

Yes, one day he would own a yacht of his own.

The stewards would be Japanese and wear white coats.

The sailors would polish all the brass every morning, and when they were cruising at sea, and ran into foul weather, the skipper would call Andy to the bridge to take the wheel. He would defer to Andy's judgment, just as Mr. Shinhosler's captain always did.

Oh, Andy would shrink from admitting how old he was when he gave up this game that he played with himself! Maybe he never gave it up at all. Certainly he never gave up the idea of his own ship that would carry him wherever he wanted to go. His own ship that would never falter before any storm, but maintain her course and speed.

And then the War came.

Andrew was rejected by a recruiting office for the Navy because he had flat feet.

How Andy had wanted a uniform! Perhaps he would have become an officer some day!

The routine of the office became dull after his enlistment was refused. Nothing could console him. Often he used to take more than his allotted hour for lunch, and walk along South Street, down by the Battery where all the sailors' boarding houses are, and the

Seamen's Institute. He used to eat lunch at the Seamen's Institute nearly every day. He took off his tie before he went in, and walked boldly up to the lunch counter with a tough swagger in his gait. He would bawl out his order, loud and hard, the way the others did.

Then one day a kind old gentleman with white hair stepped up softly beside Andrew. At first he thought the man was a cop.

Andy was truly frightened because there was a big sign at the entrance, "For seamen only! Crimps, panhandlers, landlubbers keep out."

Then Andy had a real shock.

The old man spoke in a gentle voice, slow with awe, "My son, have you written to your mother lately?"

Recovering, Andy quickly explained that he had no mother, not that he knew of at any rate, and tried to break away.

But the old man held him tight by the elbow.

"Ah," he sighed, looking deep into Andy's eyes. "Ah. . . ."

Andy was afraid the old man would find out that he wasn't a seaman if he looked any longer, so to change the subject, he asked him how much a night they charged for rooms.

The ancient's face lighted up at this. "You have no ship, my son? You are just drifting in this evil town?"

Andy nodded.

"Now I know of a ship sailing Monday for South America, and her captain is a fine, God-fearing gentle-

man under whom it is a pleasure to serve. You must come to our service Sunday evening, and I will introduce you. He might find a place for you in his crew." He smiled at Andy a moment, then added, "After service we have coffee and crullers upstairs."

The old man nodded, and moved away into the milling crowd of hungry men.

The next Monday Andy quietly sailed for Pernambuco and coastal points South, on a leaky three-masted schooner, with an Episcopalian mate who had a white beard, and a captain who kept eating cough drops. The story of that voyage, and how Andy jumped ship and went up into the jungle, finally coming out through Peru, is almost a whole story in itself. Except indirectly, it does not bear on what came to pass later.

But two years after, when Andy returned to work at the office—principally because he had tired of the poor food at sea, things were very changed.

Every old ambition was gone, except the central one which strengthened as months went on, to have his own ship. And to have some way of getting good food to eat aboard her.

Although freely talkative about most matters, Andrew never mentioned this determination of his to any one. Never failing, it turned in his mind like a revolving light.

II

LIFE in the office now made Andy increasingly unhappy. The way the men treated one another seemed more small and sharp than ever.

Tony, for example, reported to Mr. McGregor that his superior, the assistant adjuster, was in the habit of going frequently to the men's toilet and smoking cigarettes there. Thereupon Tony became assistant adjuster, and arranged for Andy to take his old place of clerk.

That was the way advancement occurred. As for holding a position—there were many tricks.

In the accounting department Arthur Murphy was cashier. No one would ever displace Arthur. He could not be fired because for years he had manipulated the "gravey" account, which was the shaving of return premium figures and the addition of a few cents to collection amounts that the other offices would recognize as inaccurate but would not think worth their while to dispute. In a year perhaps this "gravey" account netted the firm several hundred dollars. Mr. Shinhosler always spoke with pride of the "watch dog of the treasury," and patted Arthur on the back.

If Arthur were fired, he would tell the customers certain things, it was whispered. Meanwhile, his habit of altering figures just slightly, made endless trouble

for other departments and kept the records confused.

Arthur became quite daring and wore checked suits. The girls' rest room was on the floor below. On the stairs, Arthur used to meet the telephone girl. She was about sixteen—more a mistress of repartee than an adept in any other art.

But Andy didn't mind that. He was not jealous of Arthur Murphy. Human beings were not very grown up, sometimes, it seemed to him.

It was different on shipboard. The workmen had to go at things together, surging on a sheet rope as they close-hauled for a veering wind. Or in the fights in the fo'c's'le over a tub of food. There seemed fewer small secrets in that kind of life—which was always surrounded by an endlessly wide horizon. Andy grew more and more unhappy in the office. The booming voice of the Boss shouting at the switchboard girl sometimes made him squirm.

One day in the Men's Room, Andy noticed that Mr. Shinhosler wore a woven rubber girdle.

Why should that irritate him?

Andy couldn't say. Except that afterward, everything the Boss said sounded false. When he looked at Andy, Mr. Shinhosler seemed always to be smirking though his face was serious.

Each year as vacation time drew around, Andy felt more and more a revolutionary. He would sit at his desk and pretend to work without doing anything. This mild defiance soothed him, to an extent.

The War had broken up the old clan that used to

go to "th' Island" each summer. Andy now lived in the furnished room in Flatbush the year round. One of the boys from the Home who used to go to the Island had been with the Rainbow Division in France. He had developed consumption from gas and was in Tucson, Arizona. Another was dead—"flu" at Camp Dix while he was waiting to go over. A third had a vaudeville act he had worked up while with the K. of C. A fourth had married. He had a child every year and had to be home every night at six.

So for vacations now, what was Andy to do? Go to the country?

No. Andrew found no pleasure in the country. He did not like farm people. He had a most unreasonable dislike of them. They seemed to him a heavy, thick lot of people—clumsy, and with dirty work to do.

Where was he to go now?

The sea? . . . No, Andy wanted his own ship when he went to sea again. He wanted his own ship, for aboard that ship, he could be sure of good food and no officious mate. There would be a crew made up of friends he would find here and there in the sailor-town side of ports the world over. Andy found he had slowly planned and dreamed it all out, hardly knowing what he was doing. Some day he would live at sea. And he would live well.

He had saved nearly a thousand dollars, and he had it in the bank.

But a thousand dollars was not enough money. . . . How often he turned over and over in his mind, this

dream of living at sea in his own ship! He would often laugh at himself for thinking of such a foolish thing, and light a match, and put it out in the inkwell.

One hot August morning, Andrew came into the office late. His subway train had been stalled under the river for nearly an hour, creeping ahead, then coming to a sudden stop again. The air had been thick and sweaty, and Andrew had nothing to do but stare at the car card advertisements. A girl in a bathing suit. A girl using a beauty cream. A man in underclothes. The faces of the passengers seemed strained and yellow from the hot night before. They glanced restlessly up from their papers every now and then, then submitted passively to the oppressive wait.

When he reached the office, he found Mr. Shinhosler had been calling for him.

"What time is this to be getting to work?" growled McGregor as Andy reached his desk.

Andy said nothing, and picked up his ledger.

The telephone girl tittered, and powdered her nose innocently as she felt Andy's hot gaze rest on her.

"What do *you* say, Big Boy?" She whispered maliciously.

At noon Andy walked down to the Battery, in the hope of finding air. A sea breeze would wash away his dull headache. But there was only a blazing merciless sun. The streets were crowded with perspiring people. The grass patches at the Battery were full of men and women sprawled out, with newspapers over their heads. They were sleeping or lying on their sides staring at

nothing. An excursion boat was tied up at the pier, loading people. Women and babies, slouching indifferent men smoking cigarettes. Andy turned back, too sick to stay, without any appetite for more than a bottle of pop at the stand of a passing vendor.

The lemon soda was stale. Almost as soon as he had handed back the empty bottle to the man, he wished he had not drunk it.

Returning to the office, he found a loss report. As he took off his coat and hung it on his chair, he glanced over the heading.

"Barge *Nerissa,*" he read mechanically, then slumped into his chair, "one of five barges in a tow, broke loose in an unexpected easterly gale. Tug *Matthew P. Fischer.* Bound West from Bangor, Maine, to New York. Cargo—lumber. Labored in heavy Easterly weather four hours trying to make harbor of Gifford. Barge cut adrift. Grounded at Shark Cove. Believed total loss, no salvage." There followed the certificate number under which she was insured, and other data of the insurers.

Andy laid down the yellow paper.

McGregor, opposite him, glanced up. "Hot," he muttered.

"See this?" asked Andy.

McGregor grunted.

"Another wreck near Gifford. Wonder if it's the same place the *Python* struck last winter?"

Andy sat staring at the ink-well in front of him for a long time without stirring.

McGregor started to dictate.

What a fool to have taken that lemon soda on a day like this! Damn all this chattering in the office anyway! Too much noise. Didn't people know enough to talk more quietly on a hot day like this?

Well, there was no use sitting like a log. Andy rose from his chair. A cigarette in the "Men's" might be a good idea. On his way out, he paused by the large map of the coast that hung by the door. Finally his eye picked out the minute type of Gifford. Mechanically, he measured the distance from Boston, and passed through the door.

In the Men's Room it was cooler. The door to the fire escape was open, and the faint trace of a breeze blew in. He sat on the grating, and gazed down onto the tangled roofs below him. God, you could at least think out here. Hunched up, smoking his cigarette, he looked at nothing and thought. Things were turning over in his mind.

Faint on the hot air, above the rattle of the garbage cans in the rear of a restaurant below, he heard the light laughter of the telephone operator floating toward him from the neighboring "Women's."

He threw his cigarette away and went back to work. She was damned pretty that little girl, even if she was a fool.

That evening as he reached the door, he paused by the telephone girl.

"Tell Mr. Shinhosler," he remarked as he adjusted his wrinkled cuffs, "that I will not be in to-morrow."

"Ha! Ha!" the girl mocked, with her crimson lips, "you don't say so!"

"Yes, by God!" Andy answered roughly, his body suddenly rigid.

He stooped in the next second, and caught the girl by the chin. He had a kiss from her, whether she wanted or not, and was outside the door before she could gasp anything but the most conventional protest. "The big stiff!" she muttered. "The big stiff!"

But Andrew was gone. He was gone for good, for he was in the grip of an idea long running in his blood.

To be sure, there are men like monkeys who go chattering about their business. But these men only prove their vegetarian ancestry. To the panther who hunts live prey, life is a different matter. And to the men who are like panthers. A monkey may chatter to his heart's content, and the cocoanut does not run away. A panther has to have ideas, he has to do his prowling and his thinking. Then he must be quiet, lie in a tree top a long time maybe, waiting before the spring.

III

THE following morning, Andrew was in Boston. He took a train for the Cape.

By afternoon he was in Gifford, buying a few days' provisions and some small tools. He stopped in at the post office as the boat with the afternoon mail arrived.

The entire sea-faring population was there, and Andrew mingled with them unconcernedly. He had on a blue flannel shirt now, open at the neck, and except for his lack of tan, he looked like one of them. He heard one Portygee quawhogger talking to another about the barge that had gone ashore at Shark Cove. . . .

The sea had grown dusky with the last afterglow of day as Andrew reached the graceful bend in the bleak deserted coastline that must be Shark Cove. Andy knew all the charts could tell him about the shape, the depth, and the tides of Shark Cove. He had covered that. He had bought a large-scale Eldridge chart of that part of the coast, at the time the *Python* had grounded there the winter before.

He went down to the edge of the surf, on the deserted beach. He stood on the wet sand, where the shadow of each approaching wave fell. He listened intently to the purl of the low surf as it swept down the shore. Then with a deep sigh of satisfaction, he walked up the beach, to where the sand was dry.

Here he took off his clothes, and went down into

the water. After the first chill as the water closed over his shoulders, it seemed warm and renewing. Andy felt happy inside as he swam.

After a while, he made his way in toward the dim beach again. He stumbled on the ledge where the surf was breaking, and slipped sideways down into the foaming water. For a moment he felt the sting of the bubbles in the broken water against his face, the thick salty aroma of the water's edge. He let himself be boiled moderately by the surf for a while then clambered dripping back to where he had left his clothes.

Andy felt at peace with the world. Right or wrong, just as a plant or an animal, he had found the right place.

After a moment of gazing at the ocean, Andy rubbed himself dry with his shirt, and dressed himself. He sat down then, and filled his pipe with Serene Mixture, and let the cool night air blow up over him. . . . It was low tide, and there stretched a slowly spreading banner of white as the darkening shadow of the waves formed and broke out in the black darkness. The foaming lip of the wave slid up the beach toward him, then quietly, swiftly, withdrew.

All along the beach, as far as he could see, there were no shore lights to mar the intense blackness. Only the waves coming in from the wide horizon. A wave broke white out of a looming dark ridge, and spread out as though to join arms with its fellows.

It seemed beautiful to Andrew.

There seemed to be nothing so utterly beautiful and simple in all the world.

Andrew never forgot the way the ocean looked the night when he first reached the Cove. . . . On the way out, in the dusk, it had been hard to see the road as he followed it to the swamp from Gifford. Then after he struck the beach there was only the long white mark—the band of surf, and the feel of the pebble ridges to guide him. It was such a dark night! And Andy's ears were quite unused to all the little noises of the night—a sandpiper peeping in his sleep, the cry of a baying dog, carried from far inland, even against the regular breathing of the ocean. And then the wind in the pines at the cliff-head above the shoreline . . . the sound of that, and noises from the insects hidden in the warm lower tufts of beach grass. Oh, all the shore seemed alive!

In the sand, each footprint left a momentary glowing outline. And as the wave receded, there was the slight rattle of the pebbles and shells in its path and the sing of the evaporating foam.

In the wet sand, a little bubbling—Andy bent close—it was an air hole opening for some clam, or maybe a sand crab working around down there in his cool house. Andy looked up—out in the dark there seemed to be balls of phosphorescence looped in the white curl of a breaking wave. And just after the first streak of white showed, there came the slight sound like a cork withdrawn, a pop—like a collapsing tent—drifted in to shore . . . a wave breaking.

The whole shore was wonderful to him that first night he walked down to where the two arms of the Cove made out into the ocean. Andy guessed about where the barge lay, half way out on the Northerly arm where she struck. But like going to meet a girl a man has made love to for a long time, after she has at last promised the final ecstasy, delays were pleasant. Andy did not want to walk out the length of low dunes to where he knew the barge must lie. Perhaps something would turn out differently from the diagrammed charts he had studied.

Andy was tired, excited, sleepless—his body somehow awake all over as it had never been before. The smell of the seaweed and the effervescent foam seemed to make his heart beat out like quick footsteps on stone approaching.

The following day would be practical. It was enough to just lie on the sand this one night, trembling with what had been stirred in him. This sudden solitary sight of the ocean stirred in Andy feelings that somehow were very ancient . . . so much older than he was!

Perhaps the strain exhausted him, or maybe that old sound of the ocean was soothing, for he fell into a deep sleep. When he opened his eyes, the sun was shining brightly. Down over the wide stretch of blue the waves seemed small indeed. Out over the center of the Cove a flock of gulls were screaming madly, diving down into the flecked water to tear savagely at it with their beaks.

Andy glanced at the upper mark of the water by his feet. Yes, the tide was on the turn. That flecked, dancing, irregular water out there was probably the tide turning, currents jostling with each other.

Andy laughed outright at the gulls, and went to the water's edge to splash the effect of sleep away and clear his head. He picked up his sack of provisions and tools, and marched down the Northerly bar to where he saw the barge in the distance, heeled over on her side, with the sun gleaming on her.

IV

ANDREW always took great pleasure in a comfortable place to rest and think. He never felt particularly comfortable in chairs. That would be one thing about this life that would be pleasant—he could lie as he pleased, or sit on a bench if he wanted. Perhaps if he were whittling a stick between his legs, he would like the bench, or if he were eating a large meal. But just for ordinary sitting and to think about things and smoke, there was the warm sand to stretch out on.

When Andy first reached the wreck, he walked around it once, then climbed the slanting side and stretched out comfortably.

"When once comfortable this way," thought Andrew, "suppose another person should come along, standing up. If I look quickly at his face I can read what is in his soul. But what of that? Do I really see what goes on in there? But if I am standing, or sitting in a very straight chair I would be uncomfortable and find it awkward to say the right words, words that would only come to me after the other person had gone . . ."

Andrew gave up his speculative thought, and dropped his eye on the barge beneath him. She was such a one as is common in the coasting trade, about seventy-five feet long, square at the ends, and deep. She lay deeply bedded in the sand, nearly two hundred yards

from the end of the bar. At high tide, the water reached up under her stern, and the small waves lapped against her worn and splintered counter. The receding storm had left loops and festoons of seaweed all over her deck. They were quite bleached and dried now by the sun.

As Andrew looked long at the honest square lines of the barge, he found his eyes filled with tears. He rubbed them with surprise.

Andrew filled up his pipe with Serene Mixture, then lighted it. He gazed for a long time out over the shimmering blue of the Cove. So far his plan was unfolding well. Near this barge he could make a place to live. He could be comfortable here, he could live in peace and think out the conclusion of his plan. He had fulfilled the first requirement, timber. A place to live and a place to store supplies and tools.

Perhaps it would be wise to buy now all the gear and tackle necessary to rig a ship. Even sails! His heart beat noticeably faster at the thought of sails. Andy's plan called for everything being on hand, as far as it could be anticipated.

Andrew's plan was this. Sooner or later a schooner would wreck herself on the bar of the Cove. One or two piled up there every winter. For a long time he had fancied coming to the Cove with this possibility in mind. It was a way for him to have the ship he so deeply wanted—the chance to live in his own way.

But the kernel of his idea was that he had a plan by which he could salvage a schooner from the North Bar.

The insurance underwriters would never think of the scheme Andrew had in mind. He had read all the data on every wreck on that bar. He had studied the charts closely. Now he was ready to begin. The barge was the stepping stone. It might be several years he reflected, before the Cove saw the final flower of his scheme. But it would come about just as surely as a passing cloud will disclose the final star in a constellation. Andy's purpose was as fixed in him as any constellation was fixed in the heavens.

The sails . . . he returned to thinking of them. It would be best to buy a suit of old fisherman sails rather than to stitch new ones from narrow canvas strips.

On the *Cornelian*—the ship in which he had made his first voyage South—Andy had sewed in canvas with a thick sailor's palm of leather and a needle of heavy steel. He did not want any more of that sewing to do if he could help it. No, sails would be well worth their price. There were other things to do during the winter months. For one thing, a winter on the beach might break up the barge. High savage waves must surely come towering in toward the beach through the shallow water. They would break downward with twisting, shattering force. He must salvage what timbers he needed before winter. Then build two emergency shelters—one up the beach, and another on the top of the cliff.

Andy's head was heavy with all this working that had been going on in it. He suddenly wished the telephone girl from the office was around. He would snatch an-

other kiss from her crimson lips. That would distract him. But, he sighed, he supposed this new life presumed doing without women. . . .

At any rate he was hungry, and he could do something about *that*. He opened up the package of sandwiches he had brought out. As he ate a stale "Western on rye," he picked out the place to build the first shelter on the beach, a slight distance from the barge.

There would be a lot of gear to bring out. Andy glanced up enviously at the gulls that circled above his head. The gulls had an easy time of it. While he—he would spend at least eight hundred dollars, and would have to hire a wagon to cart out all he needed. Gulls certainly had an edge on men. They had their women, their food, and their shelter without all these difficulties humans had to put up with. . . .

After finishing his sandwiches, Andrew decided to cut some logs at the head of the Cove. Here there was a fine high cliff, parted in the center by a wooded ravine, with a small river that emptied into the ocean. The dwarf pines grew thick. It was easy to nick them with the sharp ax and topple them down to the Cove shore. He would build the shelter on the shore first. He would build as much of it as he could with logs, and save the fine planks from the wrecked barge for repairs to the schooner. There seemed to be plenty of tall pines further back from the cliff edge.

In the village they had told him there was an old logging road out to this pine grove. Only it was four miles longer to go that way. You could save these

four miles by cutting across the swamp that lay between the Cove and Gifford. Andy could bring his wagon-load of sails and rope and paint by the road. All the tools and provisions he needed for the winter, he'd put in that wagon too. Then whatever he needed on the beach, could easily be lowered over the cliff.

By heaven! He suddenly straightened his back up from the cutting. What a lot of work there was!

Andy jingled a few bent nails that he was in the habit of carrying in his pocket. Whew! He would like to kiss that telephone girl again. He would like to twist her neck off like a chicken. Such a lot of work!

A rough shelter on the beach was well started by the time the sun lowered. Andy was about to sit down and take a rest, when he saw a man walking toward him along the beach.

Andy rested his hands on the haft of his ax, and watched him come.

The man was quite fat. Walking through the thick sand had exhausted him. He did not look about much, but plodded ahead. He might have stepped from tuft to tuft had he turned up to the beach grass—or he might have found firmer sand, quite hard where the waves had pounded it, a little lower. But he struggled on, quite wearily, with his face red.

As he came within speaking distance, Andy noticed his eyes. The way they turned suddenly from one thing to another reminded him of a rabbit jumping about.

The man spat out a quid of tobacco, and greeted Andy with a nod.

Andy's back was stiff, and quite tired from the unaccustomed exercise of chopping and trimming the logs. He stood uneasily, and waited for the man to speak.

Andy felt the coming of this man had to do with the barge.

There were no other houses near, and the man did not have the look of a fisherman or a farmer.

"What do you want?" Andy asked.

"My name is Publicoaver," the man answered, "and I'm the insurance agent in Gifford. I came to find out if you mean to live aboard that wreck out there. You bought some tools in town, and asked prices at Tarbox's."

"I'm just up here to get some exercise with an ax," Andy answered. "Me and Teddy Roosevelt."

"Well," Publicoaver went on with his voice coming from way down below his collar, "I thought you might be a squatter or a bum. We don't want none of that around here." He spat. "Gifford's a clean town, and fellows like you who haven't shaved in a week—we don't want 'em."

Andy felt embarrassed for a moment about the shaving. It would have been better if he had perhaps. But this was not the office. He was as free as the gulls. But—

"I shan't bother Gifford," was all Andy could find to say.

"We stand enough rough customers from the fishin' smacks and it's bad for the summer business. People don't want to spend the summer at Gifford, and bring their children, with a lot of tough cases bowling down the street at all hours."

Andy hadn't realized how much he had torn his trousers. He made a motion for Publicoaver to sit down on a log, but the man continued standing.

Publicoaver gave a quick laugh, so Andy could see the watch chain shaking on his vest a few minutes after, and shook his head.

"You won't get that barge off," he said. "You nor twenty others like you. Do you suppose people like an insurance company'ud give her up if there was any chance? And you won't be able to live aboard her, come an Easterly storm. I know these waters."

Andy sat down on the log. This remark made Andy feel better. He had heard local agents in small ports talk before. He began to place his visitor as he sat comfortably on the log and swung his foot. Stupid fool! Who would want to float off a wooden barge! Who would want to live on a barge stuck in the sand!

Andy looked at Publicoaver's wrists and saw they were so thick that you could not even see the knuckle of the wrist bone. His dark blue suit was faded, spotted, and unpressed. Publicoaver was no dandy himself.

"Look here," Andy said, "you're the insurance agent. What business is it of yours if I choose to stay here?"

Publicoaver pointed a long fat finger at Andy that

shook, and ground his jaws sideways, just as Andy had seen ugly-tempered truck horses do.

"F. R. Perkins was too busy to come out here to attend to this himself, with all the remodeling he's doing at the Gifford House. He's the Mayor of Gifford. Besides, I represent the insurance company that paid the loss on that there barge. I guess we own her now."

Andy should have known from this that Publicoaver considered himself the owner of all the wrecks on that part of the coast, but it seemed too ridiculous. Of course, the barge had been given up as a total loss. To McGregor and to Mr. Shinhosler she was a corpse, and a small one at that. Only to Andy did she have possibilities.

Still, Andy realized, he had to answer the man somehow; he wanted to finish up his work so that he could go to town that night.

"We don't want no beach bums here, I tell you!" Publicoaver concluded hotly.

"Come, come," Andy said, "let's not have any bad feeling between us. I'm not a bum. I'm going to spend eight hundred dollars in your town. I may even start a ship yard out here. It's a nice place."

Suddenly Publicoaver turned livid. He shook his fist at the ocean.

"I hate this God-damned place!" he muttered, and walked away.

V

THERE was one thing quite dear to Andrew, and that was his cap.

At the Cove that day, as soon as he started to look over the barge, Andy put on his sea-going cap which he had carried with him. It was the cap he had worn on the *Cornelian*, and belonged once to a high officer in the Brazilian Navy. Andy bought it from the negro mess-boy on the *Cornelian*, but, of course, before he wore it he cut off the shield and official insignia. He kept the gold chin strap on, which ran above the visor just as it does in the American Navy. And there were two gold buttons at each side. How Andy enjoyed wearing that cap!

On the *Cornelian* he did not have much chance to wear it, for he felt shy about putting it on at first. Perhaps the officers would think he was presuming. But by the time they passed the equator, Andy had it on regularly and nobody said anything.

Perhaps this was because he had soaked the gold braid and the buttons in a mixture of salt and vinegar which made them dull and greenish. Then too, Andy had always worn it with an indifferent air, as though it meant nothing to him. A cap was a cap.

Andy certainly enjoyed wearing that cap at the Cove. He would wear it all the time. With a little sand, he

brightened up the buttons at the side, and rubbed the braid.

Perhaps it was silly to think so much of a cap, but Andy truly enjoyed having it on his head.

He wore it into Gifford that evening. He kept it right on his head when he walked into the restaurant.

Was he not a commander?

That cap . . . later on, he lost it—foolishly. One day in a fit of temper he threw it into the sea. . . . But that night when he walked into the dining room at Mrs. Spielfogel's, he had it right on his head, not carelessly, but on straight, with the visor even and level over his eyes.

Andy sat down at a table where he was alone, and waited for his soup to be brought in.

"Francelle," he heard the proprietress call to the girl who was bringing in his soup, "let Gladys take that table. That is not your table."

The girl did not answer Mrs. Spielfogel, but kept straight on, right up to Andy's table. At first Andrew did not glance up at her, for he suddenly felt rather than saw, that she was beautiful. He couldn't have seen that she was beautiful, for he looked up only the moment when Mrs. Spielfogel addressed her.

He said to himself, "It is impolite to stare at servants."

He was conscious of Francelle touching his shoulder with her arm as she bent over to arrange a napkin over the spotted tablecloth at his place. It seemed to An-

drew she was just the least bit deliberate. His heart beat quickly, for no reason at all.

Confused, Andy tried to look up sideways at her.

"It is such a pleasant evening," he said.

She did not say anything in answer, but went on filling the tumbler with water and arranging the knife and fork and spoons.

Then she set down a plate of soup, and picked up her tray.

"I saw you come in," she said in a soft voice, all of a sudden.

Andrew had seen her hands, when she was bending over him and arranging his place. They looked to him to be strong hands, but slender, with their touch lingering on everything they came against.

When people puzzled Andrew, or when he wanted to know what they felt, he often found himself looking at their hands. A face might be a mask, but hands sometimes showed how people were inside.

Andy picked up his spoon, then tried to say something. But he felt confused by all that he knew. She was gone, moving quietly away when he came to his senses.

"Ha!" Andrew said to himself, going at the soup, "here, you fool, you have business in this place, and you go mixing yourself up with a girl right off at the start."

Andy ate the soup with a good appetite, for he was hungry. When the plate was empty, he had stopped thinking of the girl.

She was standing at his side.

In the same soft voice, she told him what was next, and he deliberated at length on the choice. "Here, you fool," he told himself, "have a good look at this woman, satisfy your curiosity, and be done with it. Put the whole matter out of your mind."

Perhaps if Andy looked at her hard he would see a mole on her cheek, or an ugly turn to her lips that would make it easy for him to forget her.

But no, once he started to look, he did not take his eyes away. He stared like an ox. "So stupid of me to stare this way," he thought, "the woman will think me a fool. This is not the way to win a woman. It is by smart talk that they are at first defeated."

She wore a white apron that fitted tightly over her breasts when she straightened up. Oh! Andy could not take his eyes away. She was slim, and young, and her mouth was red.

Andy saw her eyes, and they were gray. They seemed like pools of water at rest.

Her eyes, the expression of her face, was gentle, passive. That look filled him with a ruthless desire to twist her hair. It made him fierce inside. Did not a girl so beautiful know better than to walk around quietly, this way, with such an open look on her face? By heaven, she should know better! Some one would teach her a thing or two some day! Andrew noticed she was dressed all in white under the apron, and not like the other girls. The sleeves buttoned tight about her

wrists, and made them seem tender and lovely. They made her hands beautiful.

"Look here," he said, "where did you get that dress you have on? Are you a governess to some family at the Gifford House in the day?"

She smiled slowly. Oh, gracious soul, what a smile! Her teeth so white. Andy noticed her neck flush a warm pink. He wanted to tear that white dress from her shoulder. Oh, but she would have such a lovely white shoulder underneath!

She laughed in the same soft voice.

"This is a hospital uniform. It's strange you should notice it. But they are the easiest thing to wear here, and I have a lot of them. I was fired out of training at St. Luke's-by-the-Sea."

"Oh, ho—you were—" Andy exclaimed, with an unworthy suspicion.

"So I work here," she answered. "For a while in the summer I worked at the Gifford House." She turned her head toward the door a moment to see if Mrs. Spielfogel was watching her.

As she turned, Andy saw the shape of her breasts again under her taut apron. It filled him with hot anger, to see her standing up close to him that way, so unconcerned. She had better be careful!

"Are you to be here long?" she asked, dropping her eyes to Andrew's.

"No, I have my own ship," lied Andrew, "she's anchored not far from here. I shall be going back to her soon."

"Oh, you are a Captain."

Andrew smiled, and nodded indifferently.

"Is it a coastwise schooner—a fisherman?"

"Oh, no," Andy answered, "I'm a deep-water man. I expect to take my schooner next to Rio, in South America."

"Oh," she answered, and seemed impressed.

A pause.

"I have always wanted to travel," she said with a sigh. Then she straightened up with a business-like air.

"So you will have the corned beef and cabbage," she said in an off-hand voice, and walked away.

"See here!" Andy wanted to shout after her, "who told you I wanted that? What do you mean!" Andy never gave her that order, to be sure, for he did not like cabbage.

VI

How clearly some faces cling to the mind!

Andrew remembered exactly the most minute things about Francelle's face. How her nose if you saw it from the side appeared to turn up, but when you came closer, or looked down on it, it was straight. Her eyebrows, how they curved lightly above her eyes, and seemed to move upward when she laughed. . . .

What foolish things people do! There was this Publicoaver suddenly turning from Andy to curse the water of Shark Cove. There was Francelle bringing cabbage as though Andy had ordered it when he never did.

He asked Francelle why she brought him the cabbage, and she said because he had ordered it, of course.

This made Andy impatient, and he complained that she was slow.

She said he shouldn't mind waiting a minute, coming in so unexpectedly.

"The ticking of a minute can be a long time," Andrew drawled slowly, with his eyes on her.

This remark seemed to frighten her. She seemed shy the rest of the meal. She would not talk to him again, and Andy saw her looking queerly at him from the door.

"Well, it's just as well your love affair does not

bloom too quickly," he told himself. "You have business to attend to in this place, and you have wasted too much time already. A man does not receive a schooner as a gift from the ocean every day in the year and you must not let it slip through your fingers when it comes."

When Andrew finished his meal, he gave not another thought to Francelle, but left the restaurant quickly and put his cap on, and went down to the fish pier.

It was here that he must bargain for an old suit of sails.

Andrew went among the vessels that were tied up, and whose masts seemed to be about the height of those most common in the coastwise trade. Andy asked this man and that how much he would sell the sails on his schooner for, or if he had any old ones he was not using.

Just the canvas for new sails—without any work stitching the long narrow strips together—would cost several hundred dollars. Andy neither had the money to pay for them this way, nor the inclination to stitch them up. He could not have done the work even if he had a whole sail loft to work in, and many months. Sails have to be made so carefully, for they are sewn to belly out and hold the wind, they are not just a flat piece of canvas. They are cut on a curve, each piece is cut on its particular place in the pattern.

Andrew found a mainsail here, and a jib there, and another man would sell him a staysail and foresail. They were old pieces of canvas, mostly, that no longer

could be used, being so patched up and unsafe. But all Andrew wanted, after all, was a suit of sails to last out several short voyages that would earn the money for new ones. He could not be too particular, of course.

The prices these men asked were too high, Andy felt. He could not afford to pay them, and so he went back to Mrs. Spielfogel's for the night, unhappy indeed, and feeling all he had planned was in vain.

Before going to bed, he smoked his evening pipeful of Serene on the porch, and answered civilly but vaguely all the questions that were put to him. He learned that Mayor Perkins, whom Publicoaver had spoken of as the owner of the Gifford House, still kept up his connection with the "natives."

He was the undertaker, and an elder in the Presbyterian church that had white columns in front of it, and stood back from the road under elms that were covered with white dust.

There were four churches in Gifford, Andrew learned.

The next morning, he resolved, he would go and see Mr. Perkins' church, go in the high door, and see what it was like inside. And he would buy all his provisions that day, and in the evening, dicker again with the men on the fish wharf about the sails.

This would make it possible to leave town on the third day, in the evening. Before he left, Andy agreed with himself that he should have a little spree. The men on the porch had been talking about how hard the

cider was getting. So Andy decided to try a jug himself.

He did not want to leave Gifford with the little sad spot in his heart that kept returning to think of Francelle. If you drink, then regrets go, and work is a happy thing to do that makes you feel like singing.

Andrew inquired the best place to buy cider, and perhaps he did not ask with the proper indifference. He wanted to be sure, first of all, where to get it, and in the second place, that if he drank a gallon of it he would really get some effect.

Elijah Jenkins, a very old man with a quavering voice like a schoolgirl, was the proprietor of the general store. He had cider, it seemed.

In a high trembling voice this Jenkins turned and said: "Now you be careful, young man, don't go to getting drunk around here. This is a strictly temperance town. Gifford is a quiet town."

Andrew noticed that Jenkins had false teeth, was half blind. He'd be no judge of a hard drink, such as a sound man might need. Jenkins's cider was probably so weak that all Andy would have for the trouble of drinking the stuff would be the annoyance of getting rid of it.

When he had been talking to the men on the porch that night, Andy did not mention his scheme to get a ship. Oh, no! He was wise enough for that. Surely they would ask questions. And Andy, out of conceit, might have given his plan away. He might have told

them just a part, and they would have guessed the rest. Oh, no! He was not so simple as that. For look, the sea might not give a man a ship for his own every day in the year.

He was quite proud of his silence as he lay in bed thinking over the day's work. He had seen Publicoaver among the group on the porch later in the evening. He did not speak to Andrew, but looked right past him. You might have thought, Andrew felt, that he would have made some reference to their meeting at Shark Cove, but he did not. Publicoaver looked very tired indeed. When you are unused to a long walk through the sand, Andy reflected, it is hard to be polite.

Andy counted off on his fingers all the things he was going to do, as he lay waiting for sleep in the narrow room. To-morrow he would buy everything he needed, and in the evening dicker for the sails. The next day he would pack all his purchases in the wagon he had seen at the railway station, and have that hackman drive it out. Oh, he would be happy, going out on that ride. He would get a long cigar and smoke it.

Andrew finally fell off to sleep.

VII

THEN came the day on which Andrew celebrated his departure from Gifford.

What a day it was! A thorough shore spree began as soon as he had everything stowed in the station hack. Andy's mind was clear of worry, for he had bought a full suit of sails at an excellent price the evening before.

Yes, he had finally put that fisherman down to a good price, and the sails were his. The fisherman even threw in a pair of topsails for which his short-masted craft had no use. These were nearly new.

Alcohol, like misery, has ever loved company, and the noise of a withdrawn cork has ever been a fire call to the bibulous. It was McGinnis the hackman who answered the call and joined Andrew's celebration. Until noon, they both drank together, perhaps consuming two quarts apiece of Jenkins's cider without any particular damage to themselves or the town.

In the enthusiasm of the moment, Andy told McGinnis part of his scheme to get a schooner. Drinking together, of course, Andrew had found it impossible not to speak of the matter uppermost in his mind. How else could he feel perfectly free and happy except to do this? The dear love of comrades, kindled by alcohol, loosed nearly all restraint and shrewdness from Andrew. McGinnis was so drunk he couldn't remember anything from one minute to the next anyway.

There was no time for lunch that day. In the afternoon they had several more jugs of cider. They had to have something to do between drafts at the jug—for even that becomes a monotony. Accordingly several enterprises were arranged. Andy and McGinnis went out to buy some extra things for the schooner that was to be.

Andy had more money on account of the good bargain he had made in buying the sails. With the winter's provisions all bought, there was no real use for it. The first thing Andy bought was an enormous ship's bell that the storekeeper assured him was an equal in size to any that hung in the belfries of the town. It made a great noise, after you struck the clapper—the metal trembled and shivered for many minutes. Besides marine binoculars and a sextant, Andy also bought a barometer, the best that was to be had at Tarbox's and it cost twenty-five dollars. As his whole plan hung on being warned of the approach of a storm, he thought this was not too much to pay for the best. After all, a schooner was worth many times any money Andy could possibly spend on her. Her lines would be so beautiful, and her bow so high and seaworthy.

Andrew proceeded, quite unaware of what the rest of the town might think of his celebration. Perhaps they were amused, he couldn't tell. But at the stores they gave the best of service, and did not smile when asked for foolish expensive things, and laugh as they might have. No, they reached the things down from the shelves and made them into good parcels.

At about three o'clock Andrew and his Man Friday were truly quite drunk.

The afternoon steamer was just whistling for the town dock, and McGinnis remembered he must meet it with his hack. But look—all Andy's supplies were in that hack! Carefully tied and packed. Andrew was not sober enough to repack them, he knew. McGinnis suddenly became stubborn, in a way intoxicated Irish have, and insisted on meeting the steamer with his hack as usual.

Andy knew McGinnis could never even hitch the horses, but McGinnis was convinced he could, and so they argued all the way down the main street. They even argued about which side of the street was the best to walk on, and crossed several times. Imagine being so stupid as to argue that the sidewalk was more smooth on one side of the street than on the other! But when you are drunk, these small things seem more important.

They finally reached McGinnis' stable, and had a little whiskey before they started to unload the hack. Andy saw a coal wagon near by in the yard, so they put all the things in that. McGinnis kept boasting that the horses knew him so well that they could find their own way out to the dock and back to the stable once he had them hitched. He knew how to train his horses, he said. It was good to be drunk once in a while, just to make sure the horses were trained properly in their duties.

Hilarious though Andy had been all day, he still re-

membered the shore of Shark Cove underneath all this talk.

He went about stowing the sails and the provisions he had bought as carefully as he could in the coal wagon. It was not so much work as re-packing them in the hack would have been. Some of the rope he lent to McGinnis because a shortage in harness had developed. It must have taken several hours to hitch the two horses to that hack and get them on the road. They did not seem to want to leave their stable.

Of course, Andy told McGinnis at least a dozen times that it was too late, the steamer had docked long ago. But McGinnis would not hear him. There were guests expected even this late in the season at the Gifford House, and what would they think of Gifford if they had to walk to the hotel?

When a man is drunk and he wants to do something, the only thing to do is to let him do it, so after a while Andy stopped arguing, and saved up his drunkenness to enjoy later. After this foolish business was off his mind, McGinnis might be a sane man again.

Andrew sat in the hack and watched McGinnis work at the horses. Andy had a box of cigars open on the floor of the hack—the longest ones he could buy in Gifford—Cudjo Specials. Every now and then he lighted a new one, and threw away the old piece which was still plenty long enough to smoke, just to show how much he cared. He had his cap on, and a fine red necktie that had caught his eye in Jenkins's store.

Well, neither knew how long it was before they were started toward the dock at last, and all the harness pulling without coming apart. It seemed a long time, and it was a long time, because the sun was red and low as they cut down the road by the town wharf.

They weren't shouting, or even singing, when the rig passed Publicoaver and Perkins walking down the street together. The horses were going along slowly, and everything was all right, except that Perkins appeared to want to cross the street in front of the hack, thinking McGinnis would pull up a bit.

McGinnis was beginning to feel what he called "orey-eyed."

To him, it meant that time when your liquor is beginning to get you, and you just stare ahead without seeing anything or where you are going. The horses just about stepped on Perkins, McGinnis jerked them back in time.

"What the hell are you doing, you drunken fool!" Perkins shouted out as they passed him.

Now that's no way to speak to a man, and you couldn't blame McGinnis in the least for what followed.

He came to life all of a sudden, and pulled up his horses.

Then he gave Perkins a good dressing down for his lack of manners. It sounded to Andrew like back in New York to hear McGinnis say "Jees Kerist" this and that at the top of his lungs. Presumably it didn't sound much like Gifford to Perkins, for he began to call names

back. Andy could see McGinnis getting redder and redder behind the ears though his face seemed to stay quite white and yellow looking.

All Perkins had to kick about was that now it was time for supper and the people that came on the steamer had to walk up to the Gifford House. All right, it didn't hurt them much, nor did it hurt Perkins that McGinnis didn't see him begin to cross the street.

Andy kept out of it at the start.

He watched Publicoaver, who kept spitting now and then. Andrew watched him do that. Andrew was thinking how some people can spit neatly so you don't mind it at all, and others are just careless. There had been a fellow in the office who could hit a cuspidor fifteen feet away as neatly as if he were playing basket ball. But this Publicoaver wasn't that way. He just spat where he pleased. P-p-thew! the hell with you, like that, it seemed to Andy.

Finally Perkins called McGinnis "a dirty Irish Catholic."

Andy figured McGinnis was going to jump off the hack and skin him alive. Even Publicoaver looked scared. McGinnis was red all over now, neck and face, and his eyes looked as though they were going to fall out over the edge of his face.

Then McGinnis thought of the whip. He got it in his fist quickly, before Andy saw what he was reaching for, and raised it way up over his head.

Andrew suddenly grew sober, as though some one had poured ice water down his back. The ship!

"Holy good night," Andy quickly thought, "if McGinnis skins this man with a whip, and Publicoaver a witness, we'll land in the hoose-gow!" So Andy threw up his arm as quick and as hard as he could from the back seat, and brought it down against McGinnis' hand—just in time.

But the whip went smack down across the horses' backs with a crack you could hear a mile.

Zowie! what a clip it caught them, right over the hind quarters! It left a welt as wide as your hand.

Both Andy and McGinnis were shot back into their seats. Just as though a cyclone had caught them, the two nags started off at a gallop, all crazy, with their feet mixed up, and mad in their harness. One horse's back was humping up when the other's was down. They were so crazy they weren't even galloping like organized horses. And that harness!

The breeze blew so hard it lighted up the cigar Andy had in his teeth. He hung on to both sides of the trap, and puffed on the cigar to keep up his spirits till the crash came. Andy never knew horses could be like those two nags, although there had been an engraving in Mr. Shinhosler's private office marked "Horses in a Storm" with lightning all about them, and black clouds.

The carriage held together somehow, and for a while McGinnis didn't try to take any turns, hoping the speed would die out. Meanwhile McGinnis probably forgot all about Publicoaver and Perkins. Andrew certainly did. All Andy was praying for was that McGinnis wouldn't try any turns.

After a while though, the horses let off a bit, growing tired, and there was time to think.

"Let's get something to eat," Andy suggested. After all that cider being shaken up in him, Andy felt there was something wrong with his stomach. And he had a headache from the cigars.

"Let's get square with that bastard!" McGinnis shouted.

"You ignorant ass," Andy yelled back, "what the hell can *you* do?"

Andrew was a fool to have said that the way he did, but he was beginning to feel kind of happy and full of sparks again. Andy was a fool to have said it because he had seen how McGinnis' face changed when he was called a dirty Irish Catholic, and Andy should have known it was sticking in him the worst way to get back at that Perkins.

McGinnis thought a minute.

All of a sudden they came to a bend in the road that led back into town. With a wave of his hand, McGinnis took that turn.

The wheels almost came off, and the hack tipped way over, and seemed to hang still for a minute.

"Look out!" Andy shouted, and hung on.

They got around somehow, and were galloping back into town.

"Listen," yelled McGinnis, "I'll stop these brutes at the church where Perkins is undertaker."

He swallowed for breath, and turned around to look

at Andrew in back for a minute. Andy saw his face, all red and excited.

"I'm going to rob his damned church!"

Let's see . . . some months later Andrew saw McGinnis in town. Andy said to him, "Do you remember?" and McGinnis looked at him very angry, and said, "Damn you for getting me drunk that day. My business hasn't been the same since what you made me do!"

VIII

THE two got into the church all right, for McGinnis had often driven in funerals for Perkins. He knew about a side door that was always open, and they went in.

As soon as Andrew looked around inside, his eyes became accustomed to the queer light. This seemed to sober him up. He began to get practical right away. He knew McGinnis was bent on stealing something, and he knew he couldn't stop him. Had he been able to stop him from going to the wharf?

Therefore Andy figured to himself this way: Whatever is there in this church that can be of the slightest use to a ship?

That would have been a hard question to ask any man.

There wasn't a great deal lying around that was loose or that seemed useful. Andrew didn't want to go near the altar, anyway—all he could think of up there was drinking cups. Still, maybe they didn't run this church with chalices. And anyway, he didn't like the idea. Andy made it a principle to respect other people's religion.

He thought a long time, and McGinnis stood there, rocking on his heels.

Finally Andy had an idea.

"What about this carpet?" he asked McGinnis. "I

might be able to use a short piece of it on the schooner."

"All right," said McGinnis thickly—he would have agreed to anything the way he was—and they started to pick it up. It was a job rolling the carpet up, but they did get it into the hack. It was dark, and everybody was still at supper, so no one saw them.

From the church they drove to the stable, and put the carpet in the coal wagon. It was a good long piece, more than Andrew could ever possibly need. But then, around a ship you can always find a use for things and there was plenty of room in the coal wagon.

Andy began to feel hungry. He suddenly realized he had had very little to eat that whole day. He determined to go to Mrs. Spielfogel's. Back into the hack they climbed.

Andy had to give McGinnis the whiskey to keep him awake. McGinnis' lanky frame was convulsed with a sudden spurt of energy as he began to feel the long shot he took. Why is it when people are drunk, and you pass them a bottle, they keep on swigging and swigging? Andrew wondered. Terrible whiskey at that.

The horses were all petered out from the galloping they had been doing, and McGinnis had to hit them several cracks with the whip to get them up to the restaurant.

As they came near, Andy thought right away of Francelle. He managed to find a whole cigar on the floor of the hack, and straightened his cap and tie so that he wouldn't seem drunk and get put out. He must

seem dignified, Andy told himself. And they would never guess.

As the hack drew up by the porch with quite a racket Andy thought he saw the curtains of the front window part, and Francelle's face look out for a second. Well, it was reasonable, he figured, they were probably talking about him inside.

Andy didn't look up again, but concentrated on getting out of the hack. His cap stayed on, his cigar stayed lighted, and he didn't miss his step to the curb.

Andy walked straight up to the porch, as though nothing were the matter with his legs. He went up the steps one by one, taking his time, just as though he were climbing a cabin stair in a heavy sea. Andy didn't think of any one, not even McGinnis, so much depended on his seeming perfectly sober when he came in with all those people sitting around.

The minute he entered, he saw Francelle. She was dressed all in white, looking straight at him, a little worried. Oh! Andrew could see only her eyes for sure, the rest was just a little blurred—hadn't he just come into a brightly lighted place?

Andrew stood for a moment, catching his balance and trying to locate the table. All the tables seemed to have been shifted around.

But Francelle helped him out. She took him by the arm, the way the head waiter takes you in a big restaurant in New York, and she led him to his place. Andrew's walk was perfectly steady. He sat down and took off his officer's cap. He gave it to Francelle,

gravely, just as you would in a big restaurant, and paid no attention to anybody else. Andy guessed they were talking about him when he came in, because they suddenly seemed silent, and fell to talking again slowly, just as a flock of gulls will do when they have been disturbed at eating.

Andrew never asked for soup, but Francelle brought it.

As though Andy wanted anything more liquid inside him!

"Well," he said to himself, "as long as it's here I might as well take it."

And so he did and burnt his tongue. He ate some bread quickly, and had to drink *more* water, on account of his burned tongue.

Andy was angry enough with Francelle, you can be sure. He was going to give her a piece of his mind when she came near his table; of course, he wouldn't call out.

But when she came over and smiled down at him, she seemed like the doctor who stands by quietly and takes your pulse with an air of "oh, yes, I know all about what's the matter with you—you'll soon be better." It didn't last long though, this feeling he had.

She wasn't smiling at him in an ugly way at all. Andy felt she wanted to help him. He felt she was his friend and that everybody else in the whole restaurant was his enemy, looking at him sourly the way they were, as though they had never before seen a man who didn't behave just so.

Oh, well, thought Andy, these people in Gifford!

Andrew wanted to reach out and take Francelle's hand, it looked so smooth and white, just to let her know he understood how she felt about every one else in the whole room and that he felt that way too.

"Are you leaving to-night?" she asked.

"Yes," Andrew answered. He wanted to say a whole lot more, but he didn't want to risk mixing up his words.

"Oh, you are," she said, as though Andrew had somehow offended her, and went away.

She came back with his plate soon.

Andy didn't want to eat particularly. But then he thought—"See here, man, *this is the last meal you get cooked for you!*"

He might as well feed up, though now he saw the food, he was still hungry without exactly wanting to eat. Any one who has ever drunk as much cider and whiskey in one day as Andrew did in that day will know just how a man can be hungry and yet feel full inside at the same time.

Andy looked at his food for a while, and each time he looked at it he had to make a little excuse with himself and just take a sip of water. How tasteless the water was! What a poor drink water was!

Some one passed and Andy looked up.

It was Mrs. Spielfogel, all dressed up, in a white dress that looked as though she copied it from Francelle's uniform. But her sleeves were of a thin stuff and showed her immense upper arms. Andrew was so amazed at their size that he stared.

She caught his glance.

"Oh," she whispered as she passed the table, "I think you're disgusting to come in here drunk this way! You're not decent."

Andy wanted to shriek back, so that the glass chandelier would crack and fall, as loud and as long as he could, like a masthead hail—"Oh, what a big fat bitch pig *you* are!"

But he didn't.

She spoke with a sneer Andy had no answer for. It paralyzed him, her saying he was disgusting just when he was thinking the same about her. There's something about a boarding house or a rooming place that can faze the most glib fellow.

Madame can always go one better, and so professionally.

The rattle of china going into the dish-pan outside in the kitchen interrupted Andrew's train of thought.

Washing dishes—

Andrew thought of it with a shudder. If having a place to live were the first difficulty of life, washing dishes and pots was the second. Only the bother of cooking could approach it as a fundamental difficulty of life.

He couldn't eat anything more. He had lost his appetite entirely.

Andrew must have looked sick, for Francelle came over toward him from the corner where she was standing. For a moment she stood undecided, her tray poised on the outspread fingers of her left hand.

With a great effort Andrew tried to think clearly.

His heart beat so he heard it in his ears; then he grew calm again, and could think.

Dare he ask Francelle to come to the Cove?

To-night?

Why not? If she were coming, she might as well come right now, while he had a hack all engaged and everything.

If she came, he'd never have to cook! *He'd never have to wash a dish or a pot.*

Even tin plates have to be washed once in a while. They have to be dried or they rust. Lord, if she came, he'd be through with all that.

Washing—pugh! Andy shuddered. *Cooking*—he groaned.

All this done with—if—Francelle came to the Cove.

But—how impossible! A woman like Francelle who fixed her hair that way, and had such fancy fingernails —why should she want to come to the Cove? Women do not like discomforts in living. In all the rooming houses Andrew had ever stayed he'd heard them complaining that their room was too cold, or it was not clean, or the bed had a lump in it.

With a schooner on hand, or even with the preparations for his final embarkation going on, Andrew would be in no position to have a good time with her. He'd be too dog tired at night from work (to put it plainly) to love her the way he'd want to. Perhaps he'd waste all his time on her. Lord, just to look at her was enough to give him that little giddy sensation at the back of his neck that meant, what of it! to everything

else in sight. He'd let go. He'd give up the idea of a schooner if he once let go.

Whatever happened, it would not be easy.

It was so hard to think, there in the restaurant with everybody looking at him. Francelle was near, as though if he wanted anything, Andy could speak. Oh, how his heart beat!

Andrew always had trouble with his heart with women that stirred him the way Francelle did. He just couldn't speak. The first time a woman ever kissed him it was that way. A lump in his throat. It was that way with the last woman he had kissed—the little telephone girl with scarlet lips.

But Francelle was more upsetting because most other girls Andy had known were so hard boiled about being kissed and loved. Francelle always seemed to be inviting it, and yet remaining so cool, so calm, so much herself. In the restaurant, she seemed to float about like a challenge to every man she met. Andrew had noticed others in the restaurant before, their fussy little movements with napkins when she came near the table where they sat. Perhaps she would put her hands on her hips, and stretch a little and sigh, with the vaguest impatience, but with a breath that showed her firm breasts transparent through her dress, and made you ache all over.

Oh, well.

But no, Andy *had* to think it out.

He was on the way to solve one of the two great quarrels man has with this world. With his schooner,

he'd solve one. With this woman, he might solve the other.

Once with his schooner, he'd never pay another cent of rent as long as he lived. Once with Francelle—through with food and dishes. If—if she'd come.

Andrew went on this far believing the impossible, that she would. For now he fancied he saw in her that kind of kindred spirit that just accepts the impossible as though it were nothing at all, and as though she'd planned it that way right along.

Francelle always had that kind of look, inviting what the usual person, the regular person, might laugh at. She alone, of all in the restaurant that night, treated Andrew as an equal. To the others, just because he had drunk hard cider and had mixed it with a little whiskey to help out McGinnis, he had been "disgusting"—"not decent." He was a child who had wet his pants.

Why, Andrew was celebrating! That was the idea—just like Christmas or the Fourth of July—the biggest time in his life. Here he was with a chance at his own ship—possibly to be independent forever. Who wouldn't celebrate that?

Andy still had a few wits. He wouldn't sit here wondering about things any longer. That was no way to do, to sit with all those people looking at you and try to think. He'd better get out.

He pushed back his chair slowly.

As he walked to the screen door he couldn't keep Francelle out of his mind. He was sure he could keep

his head about her being with him. But perhaps she would want him to shave a lot and keep washing himself. She was used to people at the Gifford House, at St. Luke's-by-the-Sea. She had probably run away from a nice home, wealthy people, to be a nurse. Her fingernails, her hands, suggested the truth of this.

But, if she bothered him too much about shaving and washing, there was a way to handle that. She had complained nothing adventurous ever happened to her. Well, when you were off on adventure you did what you wanted to. You were like a gull.

Andy reached the porch and felt the cold night air on his scalp.

Heaven's sake, he had been thinking so much he'd forgotten to ask for his cap, and he hadn't seen where Francelle had put it. Well—he wouldn't go back in there just now and ask for it. He would feel foolish with everybody turning to look at him. Forgetting his cap . . . perhaps he could call Francelle outside and she would get it for him.

Andy glanced up the dim street for McGinnis. There was his team, and the hack, near a gaslight. But McGinnis—?

He went down the porch and up to the hack.

There was McGinnis in the front seat—asleep, dead asleep. Andrew shook him.

"Get up, you fool!" he shouted.

"Come on," he persisted, shaking him. "I must get to the Cove. Sober up there!"

There were no results. And here were these horses

hitched to the wrong wagon for the trip to the Cove, and everything dark, and Andy without an idea of how harness went together!

Still, the horses were standing peaceably enough.

He heard a voice from the porch.

"Captain Outen," it called softly. "Captain Outen!"

It was Francelle, and she was standing on the porch looking up the street to where Andy was, under the gaslight.

Captain! Captain Outen! Andrew did not recognize himself at first.

Here he was, Andy, a Captain.

He went over to the porch steps.

"What's the matter?" Francelle asked.

"Oh," Andrew answered, "the damned harness." He felt the cool air sobering him. He forgot his stomach, and began to feel pleasant again. It was nice to be out here away from those people, talking to Francelle.

It was a crisp September night. The wind rattled the leaves on the trees, and the sky was a thousand miles deep and as clear as a newly washed window. The stars of that night! How many there seemed to be—straight up—above the town, the earth darkened out of existence, just the whole arc of the clear sky. There was a shooting star! Andrew remembered—in autumn there were always many of them on a clear night.

Francelle came down the steps. She was near Andy now.

She held out his cap. "You forgot this."

Oh, it was too much, to stand so close to her, and hear her voice so even, to see the slim calves of her legs as he glanced down. Oh, it was hard, standing there.

Andrew took the cap. "Thank you," he said. "Do you know anything about horses?"

IX

"I GUESS that apple-harry from Jenkins's store was too much for him," said Francelle as they reached the hack together and saw McGinnis curled up in the driver's seat with one arm sprawled out.

"He looks uncomfortable," Andy said.

Francelle laughed. "Jenkins puts yeast and raisins in his cider to make it hard ahead of time. Who ever heard of hard cider in September!"

Well, Andrew felt he had, for one. But when Francelle laughed! She didn't seem to laugh very loud. It was just the same way that she touched things, lightly but firmly. It was a sure enough laugh, but it was something else too—as though she still *knew* what she was laughing about while she laughed. Other women might laugh, the way they touch things, carelessly. Or go to open a door with not half enough force or twice too much. An instinct must have been in Francelle to tell her how to open doors. Andrew had watched how she did it. Maybe coming from the kitchen for so long with a tray taught her, or maybe it was in the hospital, dressing wounds. . . .

And here she was going right at the horses. Andrew had told her about the coal wagon at the stable. She had taken off her apron. With a laugh, she threw it over McGinnis.

"I'll hitch them for you," she said. "I spent a summer on a farm."

She did it almost before Andrew knew, and let the horses out of the shafts with the harness all neat in little coils and rolls on their backs. Andrew and Francelle started to walk down to the stable together. As they passed down the street, Andy heard Mrs. Spielfogel calling out from the door, "Francelle!"

The horses were clumping along behind, bobbing their heads up and down the way led horses do. Francelle had one arm stretched behind her, leading with her hand on the short rein up by the near horse's mouth. Andrew felt he shouldn't have cared much about doing that. Ever since he saw a horse's teeth once when he gave one an apple—how big and yellow they were—and how many—he'd always been careful about coming too near their heads. He admired the way Francelle was not afraid.

Andrew admired, too, the way she tossed her head, and the way her black hair shot back from her eyes and her forehead. She tossed her head when Mrs. Spielfogel called that time.

"Oh, the Big One," she said in contempt.

Andy could see she did not feel friendly toward her job from this, but he only answered, "The Big One?"

"Mrs. Spielfogel, I mean. A half wit she has helping in the kitchen calls her that. The Big One. I think it's funny."

"So do I," Andrew said blankly. He was afraid to say he wanted Francelle at Shark Cove. Perhaps

it would come gradually. He tried to appear unconcerned. He just walked along with his cap on his head, and noticed the stars. Once he nearly lost his balance.

Francelle went on talking, though, as she walked with the horses.

"God, how I hate that woman!" she exploded suddenly.

"The Big One," Andrew put in.

"Yes. She's always coming up to my room at night. She won't let me put a lock on the door, and she breaks right in without knocking. Comes in and sits on the bed. I was puzzled for a long time, till Mr. Publicoaver told me it was only because of me that he came to the restaurant." She shrugged her shoulders.

"I guess that's why she puts up with me," she went on. "Because my being there makes good business. She asks me to fix her eyebrows like mine. Oh, I hate her! But, after all, I can't shut her out, and she comes in any time. I tell you, all I want is a place to go off and be by myself! That's all. I never had it at the hospital, I never had it at home. I'd like to be just left alone sometimes, and it always seems as if some one were running after me, just to cheat me out of it."

"I've lived in a rooming house," Andrew said. "I know what you mean."

She looked at Andy just a moment.

"The men are so horrible in this town—old men are always horrible, I think, just a little. Mr. Publicoaver, and Mr. Perkins. I had to leave the Gifford House because of Mr. Perkins."

By the time they reached the stable, Andrew felt they were friends. Andrew felt he understood Francelle, and he wanted more than ever to have her come out and cook for him at the Cove. There was more than a chance she'd like it. Surely out there she'd be far enough away from people.

They went on talking in a friendly way while Andy hitched up the heavy straps of the coal wagon as she directed.

"I've bored you," she said when they were almost through, "talking about myself. But you seem to listen, and you haven't asked me yet to go for a week-end to Boston."

"Oh," Andy tried to laugh it off, "I've my ship to think of."

"Yes," she answered a little slowly, "your ship. Whatever are you doing with her at Shark Cove? Why didn't you come to town with her? The harbor's deep. Rum running?"

Andrew felt hot all over. Here was a situation hard to explain!

"It's not rum running," he answered quickly. "I'd never risk losing a good schooner in that business."

"A schooner," repeated Francelle, sitting down on a box near by.

Andrew could not quite see his way out of the lie he had told. His wits would not act. Plainly this woman wouldn't come to the Cove if he told her he had no ship. He was a Captain. Captain Outen. He had to keep it up. Somehow he would explain later.

"She hasn't come in yet," he said finally, "but I'm expecting her. In the meantime, I'm putting up a place to live in. I expect I'll have a bit of refitting to do when she comes in. There are some sails in the wagon back there, a full suit of sails."

On this last point his voice took on a genuine emphasis.

Andrew was sitting almost in the shadow of a shed that made out from McGinnis' barn, where they were hitching the team. It was pitch black too, where Francelle was working, but Andy felt he could see her eyes looking at him as she moved about. He rose and walked over to the team. He heard the animals breathing as he helped Francelle make straps taut, and saw the breath from their nostrils in the sharp air. Francelle stood at a distance now, watching everything he did.

"You're alone," she said. Then, after a pause, "I like your nerve. That Shark Cove is a bad place—I mean, there are a lot of stories about it. Quicksand and so on."

Andrew sighed. "All that doesn't matter to me. I have a lot to do getting ready for the schooner. Can't afford refitting in the shipyards these days. Prices too high."

Andrew fixed his cap on his head firmly.

Everything was ready to go now, there was no excuse for staying longer.

Suddenly Francelle spoke again. "Who's going to

drive the team back?" she asked. "There's nobody out there for miles around. McGinnis is dead to the world."

Andy told her McGinnis would probably wake up and go out the road to look for his team.

"How'd you like it if I drove out with you?" she said. "You might have trouble with the horses anyway if you're not used to them. Besides, after a few miles, it's only a logging road."

And so Francelle, who had seemed so tender to Andrew, and always so distant, quickly climbed up beside him on the driver's seat. Hardly knowing what to say, Andrew clucked to the horses and picked up the reins. With a creak, the heavy wagon started off, fast at first, especially as they turned out into the road.

But when they had left the town and struck into the back country where there were trees and thick shadows on the road and no houses, it seemed slower. But the horses kept clumping along at the same easy gait, now stopping for a moment to walk up a stretch of hill.

Such a wonderful night, and it seemed to make Francelle happy. Andrew was glad, and kept his thoughts to himself although he longed to tell Francelle that the ship was only a dream so far. Quite practical, but still a dream. However, he hadn't really told her a lie about it. He had said he was expecting his schooner. He would explain the rest later.

With a horse blanket tucked around them both, sitting close together, Andy and Francelle were warm.

Every now and then Andrew felt Francelle beside him press slightly against his body as she took a deep breath of the night air. He felt her knee touch against his knee. As they jogged over a hole in the road her body swayed against his shoulder for a moment.

X

WHEN Andrew and Francelle finally reached the pine knoll it was still night. You could see the stars up through the pines. And it had been such a rough road, coming out! Andrew expected to see the dawn in the East, it must have taken them a long while to cover the distance to the Cove. But it was still dark, and the wind passed through the trees, the way it does all night.

Andy was suddenly overcome with a wish to sleep. Probably all the whiskey, applejack and hard cider in him made his wits heavy. So he found a soft place under the pines about a hundred yards from the break of the cliff. There he dropped down and stretched out. In a moment he was asleep, cap over his eyes. A thick dull sleep, without dreams. He was tired . . .

When Andrew opened his eyes, he heard the crackle of a fire.

He was stiff in every joint, and still sleepy, but the sky was growing bright. Already there was a streak of light shooting over the water of the Cove. He could see it from where he lay, by rising on his elbow. And there was a fire—out there in the clearing, near the face of the cliff, tended by Francelle. She had just put on an armful of dead brush and the crackle had wakened him.

"Good morning," Andrew said, yawning.

"Good morning," said Francelle.

"Haven't you been asleep?" he asked, as he came over by the fire rubbing his hands.

"No," answered Francelle. "I haven't seen the sun come up in so long. I haven't been in the woods for so long. It's wonderful out here. I liked hearing the water all night, the sea breaking."

"Yes," replied Andrew, "I heard that too."

"And isn't there a small stream near here? I thought I heard it down in that ravine."

She pointed.

"Yes," Andrew answered, "there is." He felt too grateful for the fire and for Francelle's presence to go into details about the stream.

"I saw a lot of animals," she went on, "the fire caught gleams from their eyes in the dark when they came to look. I didn't know what they were last night, but perhaps they were only porcupines."

After Andrew had warmed himself at the fire he went alone to the head of the cliff. Out below stretched the two arms of the Cove, beginning in shrub-covered dunes, and ending in a thin strip of white sand tipped with shoals and breaking waves. Beyond was the clear-cut rim of the ocean, the whole Atlantic. The far sight of the horizon in the early morning, especially after a storm when the air was clear, had always been wonderful to Andrew.

After a moment with this amazing peace and wide open distance before him, Andrew's mind reverted to

his own affairs. He was alone now; he could think out what was to be done about Francelle.

Plainly he would have to tell her he was not a "regular" Captain. He would have to tell her his schooner was as yet but a scheme. Then she would go, of course. Then she would leave him. And the prospect of her remaining had grown sweet to Andrew.

With shelters that could be constructed they ought to be able to weather out the winter. Other people had managed that. The Pilgrims, for example. And the Pilgrims, Andy decided, probably didn't have any Franklin stoves.

They could live here together. Was it not pleasant to think about—to be near the ocean all the time, to live through the change of seasons near it?

Andrew turned from the view and went back to the fire, where Francelle was sitting.

He took off his cap. His lips were dry. Francelle looked up at him.

"I have no schooner yet," he muttered without meeting Francelle's eyes. "I am not really a Captain, of course."

He waited for Francelle to say something, but she was silent. Her glance had fallen, so that she looked into the fire.

Andrew wanted desperately to go on. To ask Francelle to stay here with him—to tell her about his plan to salvage a schooner should one strike that narrow strip of sand bar in a heavy storm. He wanted to

tell her of the practical certainty that where other winters had seen at least several wrecks at the Cove, this winter would be no exception.

Francelle suddenly rose from her position by the fire. The horses stirred, impatiently stamped.

"Shall we unload the wagon?" asked Andrew.

And so they went back to where the wagon stood and started unloading. Andrew passed the things to Francelle and soon the wagon was empty. The horses appeared very restless—perhaps they expected to be fed.

"Have you a stove, and things to cook with?" asked Francelle.

Andy nodded. "A drum stove, and pots, and plenty of provisions." For a moment he expected she would see the invitation in this, but she remained silent. He pointed out the barrels that had the provisions in them.

"For a while we might live in a hut, down there on the beach."

Andrew thought it wise to say nothing more at the moment, and immediately set about moving the heavier things over to the head of the cliff and laid out the tackle with which he planned to lower them. Glancing up meanwhile, Andrew saw Francelle had found a frying pan, and some bread and bacon. She asked for his knife to open a pot of jam and a tin of ship's biscuit, and he fixed them for her.

By the time Andrew had lowered the first barrel over the cliff bacon was hissing in the iron pan, and in that

cold September air it had an appetizing smell, mixed as it was with wood smoke.

Francelle called Andy when everything was ready, and he was surprised to see she had found the bag of coffee and that the pot was full and steaming. He still had a slight headache and would have felt better if he had been able to go down to the shore and splash his face with water. Nevertheless he was hungry and eager to sit down with Francelle for their first meal together at Shark Cove. It might be the only one. His sadness at this thought was keen.

"See—how much I have been able to do already," Andrew thought. "Just while breakfast was cooking. It will work out this way all the time if she will only stay."

One minute Andrew assured himself she would, and the next he felt it impossible. At any rate, as they breakfasted she began to ask him questions about the cabin of a schooner and Andrew told her all about the lockers and shelves and the galley. He told her how many places there were to put things, and how much space—how everything fitted in so neatly. It seemed he could not tell her enough.

When Andrew described what a galley was like, she laughed outright. Andrew knew it was from pleasure that so many things could be so compactly arranged. All women liked dolls' houses, and the inside of a ship was like that. It was like a house that you could see all at once; the cabin was all together, Andrew ex-

plained, and full of little places to use as lazarets and shelves. If she once realized how fine a place a schooner was to live in, Andy thought, then she would truly like the idea.

Andrew went on to tell Francelle the history of several recent wrecks along this part of the coast. He pointed out how the low-lying sand bar that formed one arm of the Cove would be a veritable sickle of death. Covered with foam, obscured by high seas or snows, it reached across the track of a schooner beating up the coast in a Northeasterly gale, closing in to make Gifford harbor.

Andrew had studied the tides and charts. He knew intimately the details of the wrecks at Shark Cove.

"It is only a matter of time," he said, "before I will have my schooner. See—" he pointed to where the barge lay on her side far out on the bar, "there are good timbers there, all seasoned in salt water and hard as flint. I will slowly salvage those timbers. Up here are sails, rigging, tools." Andrew sighed. "Then it is pleasant anyway to live by the sea, to walk by it at night. In time it washes away troubles, and makes you happy. Just living here will be good."

Francelle nodded. Her eyes were far out on the wide horizon. The sight of that horizon was doing something to her. She did not know what it was. Andrew, talking beside her, seemed like part of the ocean. Francelle in some ways had the soul of a child. She had a feeling of wonder which sensed the intensity of Andrew—drew her to him because so much of him was

new. Then he seemed so much a total in himself—so sure of his ambition.

Andrew paused to light his pipe.

Francelle thought a moment.

"Once you have your schooner," she asked, "how will you get her off? If she can be pulled off, won't her own crew do it? Or one of the wrecking tugs? There's a big wrecker that comes into Gifford every once in a while. Particularly in the winter. During a storm sometimes they'll go out and anchor near the bell buoy right off the Cove."

Andrew was silent. He shrugged his shoulders. "The ocean may very well spring a trick on me I haven't thought of. But the humans? I think not."

It was Andrew's decision to tell no mortal soul of the plan he had to move his schooner off, once he had her. But though he had told McGinnis a good deal, he reflected, still he hadn't told him *how* he planned to get the schooner off. That he would tell no one.

Perhaps he might tell Francelle—just a little. He took her to the edge of the cliff, where the ocean and the bar stretched out beneath them. After all, thought Andrew, Francelle's presence had suddenly become very important to the success of his life at the Cove. This matter of cooking—he would certainly have to tell her at least a part of his plan.

"Look," commenced Andrew, pointing to the Cove, "with an Easterly storm such as you should get here in winter, with a steady gale for days from that one direction—think of the surf that must roll up and

break on that beach, and out on the bar! The whole width of the Atlantic behind each crest!"

It was so hard to tell a person what an ocean wave looked like, Andrew reflected, when you see it close to, and not from the deck of a ship. Andrew remembered long waves he had watched swelling up from the ocean floor. A wave a hundred feet broad at the base. It gave your mind a new idea of the world, all right, to see those big ones surging up from underneath you!

"Big waves," went on Andrew, "do something queer to you. After you've been looking at them for a few days and you come ashore, everything looks small and dwarfed. The streets sway under you, the house fronts rise and fall. But when you come up to a doorway, it's so small you feel you can hardly go through it."

"How long does it take to get over being seasick?" asked Francelle.

"There's an easy way to get over that," said Andy. "Just put a few drops of kerosene in your coffee. You'll be sick—hard—right away. But never again after that."

But the waves—Andrew's talk turned back to them —what a thrilling sight they would make—heaving in, rolling up and up until they towered in a hollow green cave overhead, the spray flying back off their tops!

He tried to tell Francelle about these giant waves he expected at the Cove, so that later she would understand his plan. He slowly got it into her head how high a fourteen-foot surf looked, when you saw it from the beach or a small boat.

He would not tell Francelle more. Not even to have her stay to cook for him. The idea seemed to have lived in him, in the solitary part of him for so long, he could not, if he wanted, put it in words.

Andrew looked at Francelle, as she lay there on the ground, and he felt something rise in his throat that told him he was like a wave, that he could do all these great things somehow. Perhaps it was the look of her calves that showed so firm and desirable through the silk stockings she wore. As he looked at her, anything was possible. She was suddenly the great power that made his plan alive and bright.

Without thinking, a slight groan escaped him.

"Oh," he sighed out loud, with all his longing for Francelle in that sigh, and for his ship, for what he wanted in the world; to find a way to live that satisfied him. Sometimes you fill up with something and you can't hold in. Andrew was like that.

Francelle did not seem startled. Her eyes were placid and gray as he came near them. All at once he seemed to see the ocean in them, the bright sunlit water of the morning. It was as though he had been given a secret. Her eyes were not gray, they were of no special color, they were full of small sparks of light the way a glass marble will look if you hold it up against the sun.

Andrew took Francelle's hand for a moment, then had his kiss from her lips.

And as he kissed her he seemed so close to her eyes. He felt how soft her cheek was, and for a moment he

felt her heart beating. . . . Her breasts were real, after all.

Andrew was quite confused, after he sat up, and he did not know what to say till she broke into a laugh.

"Oh," said Francelle, "let's go down by the water now, and see the barge."

"Maybe a swim too," suggested Andrew.

As he helped her over the edge of the cliff, Andrew kissed the top of her head and gave her shoulder a pat. Then, laughing, they jumped and ran half scrambling, half falling down the sand bank. Finally they paused on a dune to catch their breath.

"You needn't worry about being cold out here," he said. "I have a lot of blankets, and several extra heavy pea jackets you can wear."

When they reached the beach he told her about the big ship's bell he had, and the excellent barometer that cost twenty-five dollars, and would show when a storm was coming that might give them the schooner.

And so it was that Francelle began to stay at Shark Cove with Andrew. . . .

After they had seen the Cove and the barge, they slowly climbed back, and untied the team. Andy turned the wagon round and of their own accord the horses started forward over the rough road in the direction of McGinnis' stable and the town. They didn't even wait for a word.

"I guess they are hungry," muttered Andrew.

XI

FRANCELLE didn't need any printed invitation to come to the Cove. She simply seemed right at home among things, however fortune turned, and—like a child—pleased by all that was new around her. In talks together in the evening Andrew grew less and less surprised at this. She was born to enjoy travel and to love new things.

Andrew had watched her stare for hours into the shadow of dark water under the stern of the barge. He was sometimes afraid to interrupt her, because her face seemed so strangely happy. At first when Andrew saw her this way he thought perhaps she was interested in a crab moving off with a piece of seaweed trailing in his claws, or a starfish edging along, or small fishes hovering over the queerly lighted pebbles. There are so many things always going on in the warm shallow pools.

But Andrew began to feel it was not these things that held her for hours at the slanted rail. Now and then if Andrew was sawing out a beam he would get up quietly and steal over to watch her. He could see over her shoulder and often there was nothing going on down there that was remarkable enough to amuse her, although if there was she'd be sure to see it. No, Francelle was a creature in love with strange things, when she stood for so long, alone, without speaking.

How few the facts Andrew could recall that she told him about herself! She would tell Andrew her dreams instead, over breakfast, with a curious pleasure, a little smile upon her mouth. In some ways, of all the girls he'd ever known, Andrew felt he knew least of Francelle.

There were unpleasant things, too, that were strange.

She could make a simple stomach ache interesting to herself and terrifying to Andrew. She wouldn't speak of it as a stomach ache. She'd suddenly say, "Andrew, I feel sick."

Andrew would look up, alarmed from her voice.

"Come," she would say, "feel my intestines. They're all tied up in a hard knot. Something's gone wrong!"

This affected Andy deeply and he would be troubled for hours. Maybe later in the day he would ask how she was and she would not even remember she had been sick. Even with this to remember, each time she said something had gone wrong, Andrew would feel suddenly sick and helpless himself.

One time she was walking over the dunes and she struck her bare foot against a nail.

That evening her jaw felt stiff, she said. Perhaps it was tetanus? She wondered what to do about it. . . .

This might all have come from being a nurse once. But Andrew had to shake his head whenever he thought of that way she had of amusing herself. He didn't like it! It was so upsetting to have this occur when it was so nice just to be by the ocean. Her voice, so

musical and direct, could put terror in simple things for Andrew.

For three weeks after they reached Shark Cove, Andrew and Francelle lived in the lean-to hut near the barge. They lived there until something happened one night, and Andrew finished the hut up on the cliff, where they would spend the winter.

Francelle preferred to cook in the shelter rather than over an open fire on the beach. There was always a wind blowing on the beach, and it often caught the smoke suddenly up into your eyes enough to make you cry. Sometimes they would call the place "Cove of the Winds" in unexact imitation of the cave at Niagara. Francelle's mother and father had spent their honeymoon at Niagara Falls. Andrew believed that the arms of the Cove and the ravine in the cliff must act as a giant chimney, for it was seldom that you did not feel the wind on your face.

Francelle said she was afraid of the cold. More than once she asked Andrew if he was sure the cabin on the cliff would be finished by November.

But at night, on the beach under the blankets, while the fire died down—that was when they talked most.

One night Andrew and Francelle were talking this way.

"You haven't begun the roof yet," said Francelle. "You haven't even cut the planks for the floor, and here it is October."

Andrew drew a deep breath, for he was tired and did not wish to seem impatient.

"I plan to work at that flooring to-morrow," he answered. "Only a few more lengths are left." After all, Andrew too knew that the most important thing right now was to have a tight house to weather the winter storms. Once he was that far, he would be more free for what might come. He must keep right on working. Andrew was a little worried, too, by the time it had taken to put up the walls. But he knew above every other distraction, that the moment he let go of his plan he would be done for. He hung on to that plan like a religion.

This was because he had worked through the whole scheme so many times in his head. It was the one sure way that he had found, and he meant to hold to it, and not be thrown off it. He would not build hastily, everything he built would be solid. Of course, Francelle, not having thought it out so many times as Andrew, was naturally worried not to see the hut going up faster.

But Andrew was strong. He could feel his muscles as hard as oak under the sleeve of his flannel shirt.

"I'll finish the winter hut soon," he concluded.

Francelle was silent. Andrew felt her mind was wandering from what they had been talking about. She was looking up into the sky.

Andrew set his teeth and felt all his strength run through his body. The fresh air of night excited him. He felt healthy and hard. Nothing seemed too much for him to accomplish.

"Oh, Francelle, you must not worry any more!" he cried.

Andrew expected Francelle to join in, to reassure him. But she was still silent and watching the sky.

Finally she spoke, in a queer voice, Andrew thought.

"I feel unsafe out here on the bar, Andrew," she said. "I'd like it better when we can live up there on the cliff. We are so near the ocean. A storm might come up when we are asleep."

Andrew laughed at this, to clear her mind of that fear.

"If a storm comes," she said, "I'd feel safer on the cliff, in the hut."

"You don't like the ocean?"

Francelle nodded. "You know this Cove is a queer place," she said, as though she were hesitating. "You want to be protected."

"How?" Andrew asked. "How is it queer? You mean the quicksand over on the other side?"

She turned so that she rested on her elbow and looked at him now instead of the sky. "You never heard Mr. Publicoaver talk about this place? Probably not. He lost a son here, about six years ago, clamming on that far side of the Cove. He's always bitter about the Cove whenever any one mentions it, but I guess very few people know why. I heard him talk back to Mr. Perkins one night at the restaurant when Mr. Perkins said he was thinking of starting a summer bungalow colony up here. You should have seen his face! It was purple. How he hates it!"

"Well," Andy put in, trying to calm Francelle, "that's not unusual. If the man lost a son here, he's bound to feel that way. Besides, Publicoaver would get in a temper very easily, I think."

But Francelle would not have it that way. "It's something more with him," she insisted. "He has a grudge against this place. Just as though it was a person. You've no idea! Why, when a menhaden steamer was wrecked here at the Cove two years ago he was always talking to the salvage crew they sent up from New London. He listened to them when they talked around the restaurant, always talking, but never saying much. When they gave up in June, he came out one evening on the front porch, and swore he was going to move that wreck off! He'd get something out of that damned Cove, that was the way he put it. Let the insurance companies give up, maybe it wasn't worth their while. But he—he had this special grudge, and here was a chance to get something out of the Cove, he kept saying that."

"How was he going to do it?" Andrew asked.

"He didn't have much of a plan," Francelle went on. "He came out with teams to pull her loose at high tide. That failed, and I believe he tried to dig trenches around her. But the sand filled right in again."

Andrew nodded. "Of course."

"He and McGinnis worked all through June at it, though," went on Francelle.

"McGinnis!" Andy burst out, "he couldn't even get the neck of a bottle out of his mouth!"

But Publicoaver . . . Andrew wondered. Could Publicoaver make any trouble for him? Would Publicoaver be after this wreck—put forward any schemes to salvage her? It was not likely. And if he did, Andrew knew these schemes would not receive much attention. Letters from local agents about saving wrecks were too common to notice. All the hicks have a gold mine somewhere.

Francelle had not noticed Andrew's absorption. She did not seem to take in what he had said. She was still wrapped up in a thought she had not yet spoken of.

Andrew lay there beside her, listening to the purl of the waves, and the far-off sound of the wind, and tried to think. He knew the laws of salvage. He knew that Publicoaver could not take a ship from him once he had her started free unless Andy asked him for help. Small chance of that! No, any schooner Andrew might work off would be Andrew's until he surrendered her in distress.

And if his plan worked, how would he ever come to surrender her? Once to be afloat was all Andrew asked. And that he alone could manage, if it could be managed at all.

Then another thought came into Andrew's mind.

"Francelle, did you know this Publicoaver very well?"

Andrew felt her shudder under her blanket for a moment. Then she answered.

"Yes, I did, I suppose. I hated him enough. One night he came up to my room and blocked the door and

tried to make me kiss him. His eyes looked desperate and wild. He kept blinking. When I told him to get the hell out, he suddenly fell on his knees, then began to tell me how unhappy he was! Funny, isn't it, how men tell you everything when they're worked up? He said he was so unhappy. His life seemed useless with his son gone. Of course, only I could make him happy. He had been looking at me while I waited on his table and had decided I could make life wonderful again for him." Francelle sighed, with a slight shiver. Andy felt angry enough at Publicoaver as he watched her face. Her face under the starlight seemed to show a kind of pain as it worked and moved when the words formed with difficulty.

"I let him talk. I thought it would do him good. He told me the whole story. How he went out there with Mr. Perkins to look for the boy's body, and how they found it. Mr. Perkins said, 'You have lost your son, my friend, go down on your knees and pray to your God.' I remember Publicoaver's face, how red and sweating it was as he talked to me up there in my room. And of his answer. It seemed to me he screamed the answer he made to Perkins, but I suppose he didn't or the Big One would have come in to find out what was going on. 'I can't pray to God after this!' that is what he screamed in my ear."

Andrew thought he'd interrupt Francelle and try to take her mind from Publicoaver. "All this, just to persuade you to kiss him?"

"He was pretty worked up," replied Francelle slowly, as if to excuse him. "I think it's the Cove's fault. He's been up here by himself, brooding." She paused, and moistened her lips. "You know, Andrew —sometimes I think there is something unnatural about this place. Every time you say one of the currents is unusual, or speak of the high surf that should come in with an Easterly gale, I think of that."

"Come, Francelle," Andrew put in quickly, "this Cove is no more treacherous or dangerous than a dozen inlets along the coast. You just have to be careful. In dealing with such places the only thing to do is to have a plan and keep to it. The ocean hasn't any plan—the ocean and the wind are wild things let loose. We have a very good plan. We're safe with that."

Andrew was silent after this, for the fire had died low to a few red embers and a trail of smoke the wind stirred this way and that. His eyes were heavy, so he pinched Francelle in the back of the neck to make her roll over and kiss him, and was soon asleep.

Andrew couldn't tell how long he slept, but Francelle's voice wakened him.

"Andrew," she called, "Andrew. . . ."

He rolled over several times. It was probably five minutes before he realized where Francelle's voice was coming from. It seemed so far away. But she was right beside him, where she had gone to sleep.

Andrew always felt angry when he was wakened from a deep sleep, and for a while he simply let her

call, at short intervals. She did not raise her voice, and he watched her body. She was lying quietly and not twitching as a person does having a nightmare.

"Yes, Francelle?"

"I don't know what's the matter." Her voice was very faint. "I can't get to sleep."

Andrew was tired, and it was still dark, late at night, he judged from the stillness. He heard the fall of the waves, they were breaking far out, and running in. It was low tide.

"You can't go to sleep?" he asked stupidly, "you haven't been asleep?"

Andy was quiet a moment. "What is the matter? What do you think it is?"

Her voice was low, and in an even tone, as she answered. "If I only knew it would be better. Each minute stretches out to a year. I hear every wave break. I know when the next one will break. I have counted all the stars."

Francelle had accustomed Andrew only slightly to her way of talking at night. Andrew resented it deeply. Now he sighed and told Francelle that a person went to bed to sleep, not to talk. You would forgive him? He was very sleepy, and had been worried during the conversation before he dropped off to sleep.

Andrew tried to murmur as sympathetically as he was able and then turned over in the blankets to a new position.

Suddenly he felt Francelle's hand on his shoulder.

He was wide awake with a start.

"I want to cry out!" she said. "I can't keep on being awake, alone!"

Now, genuinely frightened, Andrew asked in a voice that trembled with its effort to be wholly gentle, "Francelle, what can I do?"

"Something!" she cried, and he felt her hand tighten on his shoulder. He felt her slim fingers all taut. "You must do something. I must talk. You must talk to me until the sun comes up again.

Andrew noticed that she was shivering.

He found himself trembling, and in a sweat.

All Andrew could think of was to pat her, to touch her body with all his love for her in his hand. She lay tense, unresisting, with white eyes that stared straight up into the heavens. Oh, the passing of those moments in which all the still night was alive with this intense life in it.

There was a look of continuous, unpausing terror in her fixed eyes, that were open so wide they might reflect all the whole wheel of the quiet heavens.

Andrew held her arm as tight to him as he could, and looked away. Something new was coming into his soul, something so large it hurt, and broke away old things. There were tears in his eyes. Perhaps it was the first time he had known pity.

In a moment, out tumbled Andrew's words, poor stifled words. The kind of words he used when he made love to his first girl. He could hardly believe he was saying them, for they sounded strange. But they were coming from somewhere deep inside him, and

he did not stop them. Andrew called her "my dear." He told her that he loved her with all his heart. And he repeated the words.

Perhaps a man never does get over being a child. Andrew later was ashamed to think of those words—he would have scorned them any other time, for he was not soft. Still they were there, those words. And in a way, he was not ashamed.

Finally he looked at her face and saw her lips moving.

"Speak, Francelle," he begged. "Say something. It will help you."

"Oh, I'm so cold—" Andrew could barely hear her.

"Francelle, you're all right, just think a minute."

She shook her head. "I can't seem to remember anything."

Andrew thought it would be best to turn her thought in a practical way, to make her recognize some simple things. And he did not know what to turn to.

"It's the cold," he said finally, "it *is* cold sleeping out here."

"I am cold. I feel all cold inside."

Andrew looked down into her eyes from where he was sitting. The light of the stars seemed so bright as it fell over Francelle's pale face. It was a great effort for Andrew to force himself to talk. But he had to.

"Yes," he said slowly, "it might be just that. You cannot sleep unless your skin is warmed. It's certainly

true that your body can go on awake even when you sleep, and finally wake you up when its own strength is all gone. You must try to rest, and relax."

"No," said Francelle clearly. "It's this Cove—it's trying to drain the life out of me. It's like water from a basin. I won't know life is all gone till I hear the last gurgle—"

Her lips moved for some time afterward, but no words came. Nor was there any sound but the water, the sound of the waves running in at low tide. Suddenly out of the darkness came a light wind, over the damp sand and through the beach grass. It was a little wind, low, and close to the earth. A little wind like death.

It seemed to strike Andrew's back and chill his blood. He felt it pass over his scalp, and over Francelle . . .

Andrew, too, had reached the state where he must do something. He rose as quickly as he could. Down the beach he found the ax where he had left it.

Out of the blankets, Andrew felt bitterly cold. He shivered as he walked with the ax to a pile of driftwood. He swung the ax down into a log once. And again. It split. He split another. In a few moments Andrew had these sticks piled up on the embers.

He called out to Francelle. "I'm making a fire!"

Andrew bent over the embers and, by blowing, cleared away the soft wood ashes down to the coals. With little splinters, he caught a flame, and the orange and red of the embers vanished as the pieces of wood

blazed up. In their light the ashes became white. He put on heavier sticks, then the big ones, and went back to Francelle.

She rose from the ground as she saw him coming and started toward him. Her steps were uncertain, but he reached her, and together they made their way to the fire.

Directly as Andrew and Francelle came within range of the kindling fire, and felt its heat, Francelle seemed to relax. She sank down to the sand by the fire and pulled the blanket up around her that she had been trailing from her shoulders. Andy made her head comfortable against his and smoothed her hand. As the heat of the fire increased her eyes closed, and she leaned back breathing slowly, with queer sobbing gasps. Her breathing gradually quieted, and with her body settled against his, Andrew waited for the paling sky in the East. . . .

Andy did not fall asleep himself until the sun had risen up over the roughened edge of the horizon, a clear yellow disk. The fire died down and he did not replenish it. About this time Andrew fell off in a doze that lasted intermittently for several hours. . . .

The sun was up when Andy wakened finally and he could feel its warmth. He fixed Francelle comfortably on the sand and made a pillow for her with the other blanket. She slept on.

After Andrew splashed his face with water, his legs felt less shaky and he had his wits back again. The good crisp air would have freshened a corpse, coming

in from the clear water that broke gold and sparkling on the sand.

He looked at Francelle to be sure she was comfortable, and swung the ax up to his shoulder. . . . That morning he would really work hard at the hut. He would go up to the head of the Cove and saw out the planks he needed. But a thought struck him before he left.

Only the day before he had come across the strip of red carpet he and McGinnis had taken from the aisle of the church. Andrew had measured off the short piece that was needed for the hut floor and puzzled quite a bit about what he could do with the long strip still left over. He had an idea now of how he might use it. When Francelle woke up she would laugh all right to see what he had done.

He had difficulty restraining his own laughter.

Andrew laid aside his ax for a moment and went in search of the carpet. He soon had it on the beach. Now, it so happened that there were times when both Andrew and Francelle would wish to go a little way from the shelter. Sometimes Andrew would feel the necessity after he had rolled up in his blanket for the night, and Francelle too. More than once Andy had heard her exclamation as the sharp beach grass pricked her feet on these occasions . . . Ah, ha, such a wonderful plan! How Francelle would laugh to see the strip of red carpet laid out over the sand, from the shelter leading up a short distance behind the dunes!

XII

In a way, Francelle had been justified in being disturbed at Andrew's delay in finishing the winter shelter up on the cliff. The shelter they lived in now on the beach was only temporary—after considering the tide and the probable sweep of the seas in a winter storm Andrew had been quick to admit that all the supplies should be cachéd in the more permanent structure on the cliff. It should not have taken long to build. But somehow progress had seemed to Francelle very slow, mysteriously slow. Andrew would be gone a day, up by the head of the Cove, or in the ravine cutting timber, and no appreciable progress on the hut resulted.

Andrew had asked Francelle not to bother him while he worked. He wanted to swing his ax free and clear. He did not want to be distracted.

Francelle went swimming. She cooked. She gradually achieved order among the various possessions and supplies carried to the Cove. She thought up a way to roast onions. She laid two iron crowbars across the coals of a driftwood fire. In the groove she slowly rolled a procession of onions. It amused her, while Andrew was about his business. . . .

This morning Andrew had left her sleeping on the warm sand. If she could have followed him she would have seen him having his fun spreading out the red car-

pet for its new use. That would have explained why work on the hut was so unexplainably slow.

Andrew had sawed out pieces of the deck house of the barge and carried them to the head of the Cove—ostensibly for use on the hut flooring. He had selected this light planking carefully, thoughtfully, and had gone through the labor of carrying it to the head of the Cove. But not up the cliff. No, considering the steep ascent with one eye, and with the other fixed on the tantalizing, shimmering blue of the Cove, Andrew had muttered, "Hell, who wants to build a house!"

He was resentful of every piece of planking going into the hut.

He didn't want to pull it up the cliff.

He began inventing other reasons. See, it would catch in the scrub oak. No, you couldn't get it up without a whale of a struggle, and what was the use. For a house!

No, what a man needed was a boat!

And so he had set up a little steam box on the shore, nicely hidden from the bar by a dune. Then in the sand he gradually set up ribs for a dory. A small little boat, but very handy. For instance, Andrew reassured himself, think of the fish you could catch from a dory!

That would vary the menu, and conserve the provisions. Fish—why, there were lots of them—look at those birds! Every screeching gull, dropping like a plummet for its prey, was proof.

Besides, it would be fun to get in a small boat and mosey around the Cove a bit. It would be a good

thing to study the tides that way—and even check up on the soundings shown on the chart. He could do all that while he was fishing, with no extra trouble. Besides, he might as well be prepared to live here for a while, anyway.

And so while he whistled a tune to himself, he bent planks for the small ribs he had set up, and secured them with brass screws, putty, and oakum. Now, after a week's effort, he had nearly completed his dory, besides doing enough work on the hut to bluff Francelle and satisfy his sense of duty.

Why not tell Francelle about the dory?

Oh, well, she'd not understand. It was best to tell women certain things like that after they had happened.

Besides, it was nice—just having this secret little shipyard—he and the ocean alone knowing what was up. It rested you in a queer way, just to be by yourself, to have a little project up your sleeve. . . .

This morning Andrew rejoiced, with a sense of freedom, in being at his work behind the dune. Now and then he laid down his caulking mallet for a glance at the Cove. How fine it would be to glide out there on that water, if only in so small a craft. To hear the lap of small waves against the sides of the dory!

With a spare piece of canvas, a small sail could be rigged for her. The little dory would get him around. He could study the Cove all right, make sure of many little things that way.

Andy pulled the draw knife, bright and shining new

steel in the morning light, along the edge of a plank with exact care. There was the smell of wet seaweed, the rippling of the tide over the pebbles at the water's edge, the cry of a gull. Ah, this was a good place for Andrew to be. He was deeply happy . . . the hours slipped by, and the sun stood straight overhead at its zenith. Soon he must stop and go back to the bar where Francelle would have cooked the noonday meal. Then a little snooze in the shade for an hour while Francelle cleaned the pots and set things to rights in the little shelter. . . .

Andrew, walking back to the shelter, down the bar, felt a sudden access of righteousness. This afternoon he *would* work on the hut. Truly he would get at that flooring . . .

And so the days passed, quietly, one by one. The hut slowly took on habitable form, the good planks were salvaged gradually from the barge, and her ribs loosened to be stowed for the winter out of reach of the combers that would sweep them out or bury them. And . . . finally one day, the little dory was painted. There she lay—finished—with her slim mast straight up in her, all carefully rigged, like an exact model, ready to take the water.

Crude, perhaps, thought Andrew as he gazed at his finally completed task a little forlornly. It was hard to make the proper kind of a bow for a dory, to get the upward sheer as well as the inboard curve with only a temporary steam box to bend planks. But . . . it would skip right along over the water. With her cen-

terboard she would sail well, she would be a trim little sea boat, easy to launch through a surf.

Andrew sighed. Everything was in readiness for the launching.

It was too bad he couldn't have fixed that bow a little more neatly! Still what was the use, standing here on the sand, pouring foolish regret into the ocean when he had a tight enough little craft to navigate the Cove.

Andy's heart beat up strong for a moment. He stepped up on the gunwale and whipped a red bandanna to the mast. See—how the wind fluttered it out, tautly, smartly! There was nothing else in the world like a flag on a ship, a flag on a mast, a flag in the wind!

For how far back has that sight of a flag suddenly fluttering out from a slim mast pleased the heart of a man who wanted his boat to sail in! How far back does it go? How deep does it run . . . ?

But to Andrew it was all very simple, natural. He liked the flag very well. That was that. There was a fine off-shore breeze blowing to carry him nicely out into the Cove. He must shove off, and have done with this daydreaming.

It was all very well to have a little skiff to hop about in, but after all, he had put up with quite enough of Francelle's objections to his slowness in finishing the hut. Time now to let her see what he had been doing. She'd be surprised all right, when she saw him sailing over.

Carefully Andrew tipped the side of the dory to let the water run out that he had put there several days before to swell her seams.

As the last bit of water drew over the grains of sand, Andy let his little craft fall back tenderly to the beach.

Then with a great show of carelessness, as though many people were watching him, he pushed the dory down the sand to the water's edge. A pause to get his breath, then another shove, and she glided off into the water and floated lightly, gracefully.

Andy's face was split into a grin of quiet satisfaction.

He splashed into the shallow water after her, climbed aboard and raised spritsail quickly. Walking aft gingerly, he caught the sheet, and trimmed his sail. He made himself comfortable in the narrow stern, eased the rudder so that she fell off before the wind, and settled his cap on his head. Slowly, slowly the dory glided forward.

Andrew glanced over the side into the shallow water. Moving, gathering weigh. Soon a breeze caught the sail, and the dory darted forward with a quick rippling and slapping of water at her bows. Now she was sailing!

Ah, God, this was peace! This was the joy of life! Sailing along this way! Only a little skiff, really, but what a difference in life! To be able to sail out over that ever-shimmering green and blue water where the gulls wheeled. To hear the slap of water at the bows, and feel a breeze from the water that joined the water again after it passed his face! Andrew was happy.

He glanced back at the point on the shore where he had made his little shipyard. Already it had dwindled, distant. He glanced over the edge of the dory. He couldn't see bottom. Funny thing, he

thought, how quietly and easily you slip along in a boat. He settled himself more comfortably against the stern.

For a while he leaned back, and gazed at the clear blue sky, the tip of his sail, swaying gently, the mast, the bright snapping flag.

Then he maneuvered a little. First he tried running before the wind, with his sail bellied way out, then gradually closehauled, tacking in toward the shore again. She behaved quite well for a small dory, not much slip sideways, and she pointed fairly well into the wind. She was speedy too.

Andrew grinned again.

He thought of Francelle on the bar. She would have seen him by now, tacking about, maneuvering.

She would be surprised, all right. She would understand why a man needn't be so all-fired hot about building a house!

Gradually he guided the dory in toward the shore, toward the mark the stranded barge made on the bar, where the little shelter was. There the thin smoke of the fire that was cooking dinner curled upward, pale against the sky.

Ah, she had seen him.

Francelle waved.

Andrew cut his rudder over to make more speed. He would sweep up in grand style, shake his sail a few yards out, pull up the center board, and glide up on the sand.

After dinner, maybe he would take Francelle out to sail with him . . .

Francelle stood waiting at the shore edge as the dory slipped gently up on the sand.

She smiled in answer to his eager look.

"I guess I know why the floor of the hut was so long being built," she said after a moment.

Andrew clambered out, and pushed back his cap on his head, still looking at the dory, smiling. "Swell little dink, eh?" he remarked.

"Well—" began Francelle—hesitating to find the right thing to say—"it certainly seems to sail well."

"You were watching?" Andrew looked at her.

Francelle nodded. "But—what do we need it for?" she asked, with a laugh.

"Oh," muttered Andrew, taking off his cap and crushing it under his arm, "we can fish from it."

Francelle remained looking at the dory, not quite understanding, but realizing she had hurt Andrew.

See, now he was striding up the beach to the fire. There, he sat down impatiently. Hunched up on the sand.

Francelle sighed. Yes, it might be a good idea to catch a few fish. She would tell Andrew she thought it was a good idea. All those fish in the Cove the gulls were after. It would save using up the supply of provisions.

She slowly walked back to the fire, and pretended not to notice Andrew. "Like a child," she thought to herself. "I should have cried out or done something."

XIII

BEFORE life for Andrew and Francelle became settled in the hut on top of the cliff—before winter closed in on Shark Cove and towering seas swept out of the snow to bomb the shore—Andrew sailed a good deal in his little dory.

Out beyond the bell buoy, five miles off the Cove, where the coastwise schooners were passing silhouettes, gray canvas against a horizon cloud. Andrew sailed out there often. Or he would run up the coast toward Gifford Harbor a few miles. Or down the barren dune-mounded shore that extended in the other direction. Andrew felt he wanted to know all the currents that focussed with such strange force off the mouth of the Cove. Andrew wanted to follow these currents to where they simplified, to learn their drift and how the wind varied them.

For the most part he sailed alone. Francelle felt uncertain and uneasy in the dory. It seemed so frail a thing to venture in. And Andrew did not reason against her fear.

In a way, he needed to think about his life. He welcomed his isolation. He felt the broad simplicity of this wide water gratefully. He enjoyed the neat skill with which he had made his boat. It all was filling in great gaps of longing for him, flowing over cracks in his soul, tightening him together. New parts of him, all

dark and undiscovered to himself were making their connection to his main idea—to have his ship. Andrew was sending down roots just like a plant, in these long hours by himself on the sun-swept water.

After all, it had been no sudden whim that had sent him to the Cove. It was the product of a long reaching. And now this longing was getting strength that would later give him incredible drive to force the final fulfillment. It was giving him roots that no wind could tear him loose from, it was giving his body and his mind and his ambition a vast reservoir of strength.

Andrew now was tanned. His face was a dark brown, with wrinkles about his eyes from peering over brilliant water. His wrists and his arms were hard, his eyes quick and leaping—leaping from a quiet serenity of observation to brightness when something kindled their interest with that luster a sound body gives . . . Andrew was growing.

Meanwhile, days were shorter, and the grass turned brown in the inland fields and the marshes. Birds winged South. Goldenrod flamed and passed and was finally crisp as powder when you trailed your hand and caught it in your fingers.

There were days of fog and rain, when Andrew would work conscientiously on the hut. Other days the wind was high, and from his work on the cliff, Andrew would turn and watch the curl fatten on a wave far below, turn white and fall. Always the surf, in and out of all his thoughts, always the sound of it like

a mighty drum, a gargantuan rhythm his own heart never ceased to follow.

With the dory he had towed as many planks and ribs and beams from the barge as he had been able to pry apart and saw up. He towed them to the foot of the cliff, all the way from the bar. There he hauled them with block and tackle high up on the beach, beyond the highest rim of a far-running surf. Perhaps if the ocean did not assist him to a vessel, out of these timbers he could build a small sloop in the summer to follow. And if a schooner came his way, these timbers would be serviceable in stiffening her.

November came, and with it, roaring high winds from the Northeast, with rain, and finally snow and ice. The little dory was hauled out and covered with canvas for the winter.

Huge seas now rolled into the Cove, transforming utterly the placid aspect of its summer surface.

For days on end the gales would not cease their wild and high assault on that bitten knob of coast where Shark Cove indented.

In these storms Francelle would never go far from the hut, although in the days that were more still and cold, on bright occasions, she and Andrew would walk together. Several times they walked to Gifford for provisions. But never could Andrew induce Francelle to leave the height of the cliff, and venture down across the dunes to the spray-flung beach. The great unceasing violence of the angered ocean terrified her.

On clear days Andrew now and then could make out the sail of a reefed schooner beating her way up the

coast. He would follow that rag of sail until it was out of sight. On other days there would be a smudge of smoke, faint on the horizon, of some steamer passing on her course far at sea, her hull hidden by distance. And again, a schooner making in for Gifford Harbor would run perilously far inside the bell buoy off the Cove, beating against an adverse Northerly wind, on the long reach of a tack. Once in a while a daring skipper would hold the leg of a tack until his course carried him so close to the treacherous bar that Andrew could make out the seas piling back over her deck as the sharp bow rose and fell against an on-rushing comber.

Andrew doubted.

Nothing would ever happen. The scars of other wrecks on the beach would pass from his mind. He would forget too the files in the office he knew so well, that held the records of these scars in the beach, that held the names of schooners that were now a black weathered rib upthrust from the sand, buried with maybe a rusted bolt hanging through. It was not for nothing that schooners going coastwise in winter were often declined entirely as risks, even at rates over ten percent.

Andrew tried to reassure himself with that, the rate. The money measure said one in ten were lost. Perhaps it was a schooner bound East with coal, a schooner running up the coast to strike across for Norway or Sweden laden with sulphur for matches. Or chance might have it a schooner bound for the Windward Isles, for the Bahamas, for Catholic Latin America that was always a market for fish, with Fridays once

a week. Perhaps a vessel running West in ballast, not daring a lumber cargo in high seas, but hoping for trade below Boston. Andrew named over the cargoes, the necessity that moved men to enter seas with peril lurking, waiting, sure to strike eventually. Ships sailed, ships foundered, that was the law. In one case a leak from strain of long battering or crowded sail, in others snow, fog, shoals, obscure movements of tide . . . all these were the odds against which wages were paid, freights collected, insurances paid.

Andrew knew, and yet he feared, as a man will fear with a girl he loves and who loves him. What is certain or promised, desire transforms to the imaginary—the impossible. And Andrew's desire ran strong in him.

During every blow, with his binoculars he kept watch along the cliff-head. . . .

In music perhaps one quality which holds you is that you don't know what turn the tune will take next. With Andrew's storm vigils, however, you would not often be wrong if you said that the next turn in the mighty tune of the storm was fore-known to him. Surely with the bar, the tide, darkness and a schooner, there would be a wreck. But when, and just how? These were problems to beguile the soul of one with such hunger at stake as Andrew's.

The hunger of ambition that stirs men's souls burned in Andrew.

Whenever the wind rose against the little hut, Andrew would light his lantern and put on heavy clothes. Then out of the air in the hut, which would be warm and

close from the Franklin stove, out into the clear cold of the night Andrew would go, lantern in hand. With him as he went were twisting, twining shadows, following him.

Perhaps the blow would not be truly a storm. Perhaps it would be a clear moonlit night with a high wind. Little chance then of any mishap along the coast. But nevertheless Andrew would set his lantern down in the sand beside him. He'd then make himself comfortable, turn up his coat collar, and watch the silvered waves roll in, listen to the low roar of their distant surf beneath him. Possibly there would be the range lights of some vessel to watch as they slowly moved down the coast. Or possibly a star hung low above the horizon. By dawn, quite tired, he would return to the hut, roll in his bunk, and sleep deeply . . .

One night in January, a sudden gust of wind struck against the side of the hut. Its unusual force quickly roused him.

He looked at Francelle, as she slept. Her face seemed so peaceful, now that she had been living here in the hut. It was a warm snug place to live, with dried brush packed around its base and all the chinks carefully filled with clay from the ravine.

Andrew pulled on his high boots, and tucked in the tops of his trousers. Francelle had been happy up here on the cliff. She sang often while she cooked. And she slept so well, so peacefully. There was her face now, with a slight trace of a smile about her lips.

Again a gust rocked the little hut.

Andrew's face lost its relaxation of waking from slumber. Pleasant idle thoughts like these about Francelle, left his mind.

He struck a match and glanced at the barometer. It was falling. The sky had been gray and overcast throughout the day. As he lighted the lantern, Andrew wondered whether snow might be falling now outside. He would see, presently. He buttoned up his overcoat, and crammed his cap on his head.

As the door of the hut swung open, a rush of cold night air swept in. Its force, its cold, made Andrew raise his head. He could see nothing in the semi-gloom, only hear the steady roar of surf the wind had quickly piled up. The lantern flickered, then flared up. Andrew raised it to his face, to adjust the wick. There, it burned better.

Andrew glanced back at the hut, a dark and sleeping shape it seemed. So thick and solid. A wave of regret at all the smooth planking that had gone to make its flooring passed over him. He sighed.

There was a moon, shining with a fitful metallic luster through occasional breaks in the swift-running clouds overhead. The snow underfoot was crusted, and gave way beneath his heavy boots with a crunch and squeak the way snow always does in very cold weather. He walked on.

Andrew's eyes were now accustomed to the night. He could see out over the black water. There was a high surf running. Perhaps waves ten feet high were cresting and falling on the bar.

Then Andrew's eyes rested on a dark shape moving slowly, perhaps a mile and a half off shore. He adjusted the night shutters on his binoculars, and raised them to his eyes. For several minutes he stood motionless, peering. The wind swirled snow down from the branches of the low pines overhead—he felt the powder of it against his face, down his neck.

He spread his feet, to steady his gaze. The moon showed so little light now. Andrew crouched, and steadied his elbows on his knees. The wind swept snow up into his face. It seemed mixed with sand. He stood up again, and feverishly kept the shadowy dark image in the field of his glasses.

It was a schooner!

She was running East, far inside the bell buoy. Anxious to get in out of the blow her skipper was cutting a few miles off the course into Gifford Harbor. He was cutting in close, even if he did want to make a long leg on a tack.

Andrew instantly allied himself with her skipper. He knew the kind of man, who, given a rising head wind and sea, would try to shave a few miles off his course. Particularly with ugly clouds overhead, and the cold. Andrew, as he watched, motionless, in spirit dwelt now aboard that schooner.

She probably would not strike the bar. She very likely had no load, and the skipper was confident that with shallow draft he could slip through. If Andrew were in his place, with a storm making up, he'd not try to back that gale to make Gifford Harbor. He'd run

as far down the coast as he could before the storm unleashed itself. There might be snow later. Yes, it was probably bad seamanship to try to save those miles.

In the field of his glasses, the light that lumined the sea was even more faint. Magnification of an object through binoculars always plays that disturbing trick at night. It made Andrew screw his eyes up tight against the eyepieces to determine the faint outline of her swaying sails.

There! A sudden wave lifted the schooner high.

For an instant, Andrew caught the outline of her hull, the clear separation of her sails. He saw the green of her starboard side light. She was bound in for sure, then. Very likely a hardwood schooner of perhaps a hundred feet over all, Andrew imagined. Maybe in the lumber trade, bringing pine and resin up from Savannah. The last time he had been in Gifford he had noticed a pile of pine planking on the wharf. A spur of the railroad that ran down the coast to Gifford had its terminus there. This schooner was making for Gifford Harbor now. She had probably sailed by Chusett Light that evening about sunset.

Even then, all day, Andrew remembered, there had been a threat of snow in the air. The threat too, of a gale down out of the Northeast. Andrew thought about the skipper of the schooner. Now he would be standing on the afterdeck, probably handling the wheel himself, anxiously following the compass as it whirled under the binnacle light with each swaying plunge forward of his craft.

Andrew understood the Cove so well, the tides and weather of the coast, that somehow he seemed to know all about the mind of this captain. The crew? Probably two men—one a mate, the other a combination of hand and cook. Everything depended on the skipper.

It was on him that Andrew focussed his thought, trying to read him deeper by watching closely every movement of the dimly outlined craft. For half an hour Andrew watched the schooner.

And now the gale was freshening every minute.

Andrew felt the pressure of it as the wind swept up the cliff face and struck him. He heard the soft fall of ice from the hemlock in the forest behind him—ice stripped off far bent branches, falling into the snow.

Out there—that fool!

He should shorten sail. The wind was shifting! Andrew suddenly realized the movement in the weather. The gale was pinioning, changing, swinging slowly, imperceptibly counter-clockwise, to the left. The fool out there should shorten sail! All very well to cut inside the bell buoy to get a lead on the wind. But the wind was swinging more to North'ard. Not only a gale, but deep unaccountable tides were to be reckoned with. The schooner had passed the point of the bar. She was abreast the entrance to the Cove. Here the tide, the shifting wind would strike her. Would the fool shorten sail?

Did he know the shifty weather off the Cove, the irregular currents that drew in, that pushed out—some-

times almost in parallel paths? Surely he would notice the choppy seas that piled against one another there.

This captain might be an old deep water man, maybe a skipper from a liner, fallen out of the Atlantic service for some fault, far back in his life—predating bills of lading, whacking up with the steward. At any rate, he was new on the coast. His newness probably went back to hostile, contemptuous first meeting with these coastal waters. And now a dulled security.

Perhaps he was a tall man, and given to brutal things. Acting brutally toward the cook for instance, if through high seas the cook had not been able to keep a fire in the galley stove.

The moon suddenly showered the whole wide ocean with its light. The schooner stood out clearly now. She was yawing badly, apparently not steering true. Probably the captain was angrily forcing the wheel spokes this way and that, trying to hold a steady course against a tide that was gripping her keel, against huge masses of water towering up behind her, twisting her this way and that.

The man should drop his sails!

Andrew let his binoculars fall on their lanyard, watching now with his naked eye, shielding his eyes with his hand against the snow and the sand the gale carried through the air. The man should drop his mainsail, his foresail, and keep jib and staysail. Fall off before the wind. Give up the tack. Let the jib run way out; the wind would pull his bow straight to his course then.

But no, the schooner held her sail—reefed mainsail and reefed foresail, Andrew could see. He could see her sidelight clearly now, a dull green spot between the lunges of the hull. On every crest it shone out.

Andrew took off his cap suddenly, and let the wind blow over his head. He wanted to shout. For he understood what would happen. He knew the Cove. For hours he had studied its tides, its shallows. And he had thought, watching fish and birds alike, navigating in his dory to prove out his intuitions.

While there was water enough to pass a schooner inside that five mile bell buoy, there were currents. This deep water captain felt safe because his sounding line kept showing good draft, probably four fathoms depth where he was now. But Andrew's heart sang out for joy.

Soon that captain would be bewildered, he would grow angry against the heaving irregular waves that caught and twisted his vessel.

Did that skipper think his masts would stand the strain forever?

A sail full to the brim with a gale. The next moment a huge comber, rising under the hull, would tilt the wind out of the sail, shoulder its way under the schooner, and then the little craft would catch the gale full again—smash her bows down sideways into a solid wall of water.

The shock of each swaying plunge was terrific.

The fool would snap the sticks out of her! Her masts would go.

Andrew raised his glasses carefully, and focussed them with infinite care.

The moonlight slowly failed, and the ocean was dim again. Only white crests like bare teeth flashing here and there out of the black. The song of the gale raised a pitch. A mad swirl of gale struck down over the water.

Andrew strained his ears to hear the report he expected, when the preventer stays let go and the masts toppled, far out there. But the gale was too high, or the schooner survived that gust, Andrew could not tell.

He could still save her, that skipper, if he followed the will of the tides off the Cove, if he worked with the ocean. And yet Andrew could imagine the captain holding every inch of canvas, in the hope of beating out of the Cove. There are some situations, in dealing with the ocean, Andrew reflected, where you could gain by using less force, but using it in the right direction, in just the way to actually take advantage of the ocean.

For instance, in swimming off the Cove Andrew noticed there were two tides—a set down the beach, and one a little further on, up the beach. Where the two met, they shot straight out to sea. Andy had been caught in it once. It pulled him straight out. Gradually swimming with it, he reached the edge, and without any unusual exertion, he then turned and came back to the shore.

If that skipper would stop trying to drive his way too much with canvas, but instead watch the heave of the waves, and play each current, with a jib and staysail

set, he could comfortably work his schooner off the coast.

But no—plainly this man was driving. He had been driving when Andrew last saw the schooner. Andrew glanced up at the clouds overhead. In a moment a crack would let through some moonlight. He could see the luminous edge of cloud now.

Andrew raised his binoculars to train them on the spot where he might expect to make out the hull when the moon cleared. As he waited he felt a powdering of snow against his face. At first he thought it was from the trees, or blown up from the cliff face, and did not think of it.

Then he noticed his glasses were blurred. He quickly wiped them clean.

If there were to be a snow squall, Andrew quickly thought, that skipper would have to do some smart handling. There was wild water down there, and in snow, with the treacherous bar, no place at all for close maneuvering.

Slowly, as the moon reached a crevice in the clouds, a dim radiance grew out of the intense black of the night. Again Andrew could see.

The schooner was still on her course!

The skipper had taken in his foresail. There! They were taking in the peak now, just getting it down.

Breasting the seas, Andrew fancied he could catch the flight of spray up from her bows, when it shone against her lights. The men had storm lanterns on deck. Two very bright lights, that showed fitfully.

They were hidden with each plunge into the forward wave trough.

The moon slid back under the cloudbank, and Andrew let his binoculars down with a curse of impatience that he could not have watched longer.

He pulled his cap on his head, and began to walk up and down a short distance, thinking, every nerve in his body awake, his heart beating in key with the frenzied gusts of wind. He lifted his face.

Snow. He growled to himself. No chance for another break in the clouds now, with this snow squall blowing up out of the sea. He tried vainly to think of the skipper again. To picture himself in command. Why hadn't that fellow put back, before the wind? Seas too rough? Want to make a harbor before they grew bigger? Yes, but after all, winter on the Atlantic was not a tea party. During that gust, could anything have happened to make that skipper take in his foresail? Andrew made a guess at what had been happening out there in that wild wind-whipped water.

Some of the rigging on the foremast had likely been carried adrift, that was it. It had been torn loose by the plunging boom. Pounding into a high sea, the up and down jerks of the boom had started the windward shrouds. Now the mast was loose in its stepping.

Andrew stopped, and pressed his gloved hands against his cheeks to help him think. Yes, and she was probably making water. Those moments of wild lurching before they got the foresail in, had sprung

her planks. She was leaking. Therefore the lights on deck.

That cleared the problem. When he had last seen the schooner she was almost directly between the two U-like arms that stretched out to form the outer ends of the Cove. Soon she would have to tack, with the wind against her. Head out toward the open sea, then head in toward land. Back and forth she would slowly beat her way till she had a lead on Gifford Light, and could run in to the Harbor.

Andrew shook his coat, and wiped his eyes clear. The air was thick with snow now. Andrew suddenly realized he could just see the edge of the cliff. He had to squint to see just a few feet ahead. The trees behind him were hidden.

Making water, tacking back and forth, trying to get by the outer end of that bar—Andrew's mind went on with its thinking as he walked stoically up and down his path. The bitter edge of the wind stung him through his clothes. But he did not feel it. Now and then, he would stop and listen, fancying he heard something.

Then he would go on with his walking. There was that bar, like a low-lying sickle of death across the path of the schooner, lying between her and Gifford. A skipper making every possible effort now to reach harbor . . . Would he clear it? Would the set of the tide draw him in too far in this swirling snowstorm? Andrew remembered how swiftly the water shoaled off that bar.

If she struck . . . if the schooner struck, would she be badly smashed, going at the rate she was?

Andrew fancied he heard a ship's bell rung in quick successive strokes. He stopped dead in his tracks, and a chill ran up and down his spine.

That might have been her!

She might have struck then, on the bar!

Andrew bent every nerve to attention in trying to catch another sound out of the height of the gale. Splintering wood, the cry of a man—anything that would end this suspense.

Could it have been the bell buoy? Andrew dismissed that as impossible. The sound of the bell buoy would have a hard time rising above the steady roar of such a gale—sound from five miles out.

Andrew wanted to go down to the beach.

But it would be impossible to go out on the bar till the storm quieted. In the dark, with this snow, a sudden high wave might get you, in a flash.

Damn that sound! Again, rising above the high wail of the wind, the booming surf, he heard it. A ship's bell, no mistake, rung in quick strokes, madly. Again Andrew felt that chill run up his spine.

That schooner had struck.

He was sure of it, and it made his body tingle all over. He felt his scalp under his cap wrinkling queerly. He trembled. He beat his thigh with his fist so that he nearly cried out with the pain.

It brought him to his senses.

He thought—"What can I do before dawn—before

this wind goes down? Nothing. I can't help the men. The schooner won't break up before morning. It must be nearly three o'clock now. They can hang on to her, they'll have to, till I can get out there to them, or they get in."

But here—he was trembling still. Why was this? He caught himself stumbling in the snow, as if he were drunk. He struck his thigh again, in the sore place. He must think. He must stop this walking dizzily along the edge of the cliff. He would go back to the hut. He would stuff his pipe full of Serene and smoke it quickly.

He would wake Francelle, and get her to make some black coffee, as strong as tar. That would be stuff to quiet a man. And here, his hands were numb, his face too.

He had better get in there right away, and pile some wood into the Franklin stove.

Andrew stumbled on through the thick flying snow, now running a few steps, now walking, breathing hard from the effort. Finally he gained the door of the hut, and forced it open.

XIV

FOR the rest of the night Andrew paced the floor of the hut. About five in the morning, the snow stopped, and the wind commenced to fall away gradually. A clear cold wind out of the North gave the dawn a dull blue color, pale across the sky, slowly spreading upward into faintly yellow tints.

During the night Andrew had taken so much of Francelle's thickly brewed coffee that with the first flush of light in the East, he was out on the cliff-head scanning the dim breaker-swept waters of the Cove. He was as eager and as awake as he had ever been before in his life.

Slowly the shadowy darkness left the earth, regretfully, changing through a translucent gray that veiled all from Andrew's eager eyes but the white marks of the surf.

At last the unreality of dawn yielded to the firmer shapes of the earth and the extending sight of the sea.

And there on the surf-covered bar lay the tilted mast of the schooner. In the fitful moonlight the night before, in the snow, she had struck the bar.

Andrew could not fit the eye pieces of his binoculars to his eyes, for the trembling of his hands.

They were not soft hands—their palms were hard, their backs burnt by the sun. There were tears in his eyes that his schooner should at last be within reach of

his plan. And his eyes were not eyes with the world unseen, with the mysteries of birth and death undisclosed. They were eyes grown clear and steady from judging tides and distances, from estimating lengths of plank. They were eyes that had somehow deciphered the obscure, yet simple elements in his own hunger, and had striven to make of them a total. . . . Andrew would make his life a total, that elusive idea which so often haunts a man without his being aware of its necessity. He would be working it out, no less the fool of nature than the salmon who descends the river to meet the mystery of the sea . . . no less the fool of nature than the flag that flies so bravely from a masthead in the wind. . . .

Slowly eyesight cleared, and at length Andrew's shaking fingers established the focus of his binoculars.

One slanting mast, in the dim light . . . a hull awash with spray of combing waves, a hull driven up on the sand. Between the waves, Andrew saw how far the schooner had slid up the sand. She had been going at a speed. . . . But her foremast—where was that? It had been cut away. Only the mainmast left standing. Soon that would be bitten off by the pound of the mighty waves.

Francelle's voice came toward him.

"Andrew—!" she called with excitement, "the schooner?"

Andrew dropped his glasses.

Now another human had spoken, the reality of his prize seemed to come on him suddenly, as grief will

sometimes. A sudden shout of joy broke out of him.

"Come here!" he cried, and held out the glasses to her as she approached him on the cliff.

Francelle slipped off her mittens, and took the glasses from Andrew. She followed his finger pointing down the gray sky to where it showed the mast against the bar.

She looked for a long time. This schooner, half hidden by the dim light of dawn and the rising and falling spray, could hardly be the reality that had claimed Andrew's thoughts with such complete devotion.

Andrew could not wait for her to finish looking.

"She's everything we hoped for," he burst out. "I can't be sure, of course, but from the way she handled last night, I think I know just what she's like."

Francelle dropped the glasses, smiling, faintly incredulous.

"I don't see how you can tell from that. When will you be able to get out to her? When—do you think in an hour?"

Andrew shook his head. "The surf won't go down till to-morrow, and maybe there'll be more wind to-night. But I can get pretty close to her. I'll be able to tell a lot this morning."

"The men though—her crew?" put in Francelle anxiously.

"They can get off if they have to. But she isn't going to break up. They might even get off now—with her bow driven so far up on the beach. Risky, but they

could do it." Andrew rubbed his lip thoughtfully. "Her skipper must feel badly about losing her," he muttered, then took the glasses from Francelle again.

He kept staring through them, trying to interpret each new line and shadow in that distant hull that the growing light revealed.

Several times Francelle was about to speak, and stopped—sensitively aware of Andrew's mood, timidly afraid of the intrusion of her speech.

"You don't mind, Andrew—" she began hesitantly, "if I ask you questions? There's so much I want to know."

"Go ahead," answered Andy, still fixed on his schooner.

"Well, won't the insurance people try to salvage the schooner? What would you do then?"

Andrew laughed. "You know the sands of this Cove. You've heard of them. Look—she is driven far up on the beach. When the storm is out she'll be tightly bedded in the sand."

Francelle took the glasses, looked through them, and returned them to Andrew.

Andrew went on. "They'll never pull her off with tugs—they've never got a stranded ship off that bar yet, and this schooner is on hard and fast, I can tell you. She was going at a great clip when she struck. Her skipper was sailing her hard."

"But you," put in Francelle. "How will you get her off?"

Andrew dropped the glasses. "I've thought of it a

long time, Francelle. Back there in the city, and out here at the Cove. Oh, I shan't do anything till they get through, but I have a plan!"

"And that—?"

Andrew frowned. "I can't tell you, Francelle. It would take too long now. Later. But I won't start to work it out till spring—maybe they'll be so slow with salvage it'll be June or July before they give up—surely not till after the high neap tides in the springtime. Then—when she's declared a total loss, I'll start."

Francelle loved Andrew for his reticence. It charmed her, as one is mesmerized by a bright object fixedly stared at, to see Andrew in the deep grip of his idea. She felt it was sacred to him, with quick primitive instinct and simple understanding. And so she leaned and kissed his shoulder, and went away to fry some bacon and start oatmeal simmering.

She left him standing there on the cliff-head, motionless, outlined against the sky, staring at his schooner.

Francelle remembered only one thing about ships. One sight moved her. For a while she had lived in a town up Gifford River, and she had seen ships go down the river with the tide at night. She used to love to watch them, floating down the black stream, everything shadowy and unreal but the soft sound of the bow wash, the sounds of life aboard—men calling out or moving on deck. There was just the fixed relation of the running lights to each other, floating in the air, moving. It was like some heavenly constellation brought to earth in perfect miniature, floating away.

Living as she had on Gifford River, and later near the Harbor, had taught her that one poetic thing about ships. She never mentioned it to Andrew. He probably wouldn't understand.

It was that memory—that sense of a group of stars brought down to earth, and floating away so steadily, so calmly, that made her feel she wanted to travel. To go to strange ports with these ships! All her life she had seen them, coming in to harbor, going out again for some far point on the map—beyond the horizon rim.

Thoughts of these far places and the old longing to see them, to go with a ship once, were in her mind as she prepared Andrew's breakfast.

He seemed so sure he would get the schooner off. She had never faced the possibility that he might not. Suppose he failed?

Well, she could go back to Spielfogel's and work again!

She felt sounder, happier in her mind and less troubled after this steady living under the constant eye of the weather. She could go back.

But it would be so hard to be away from Andrew . . . unconsciously she had taken direction and force from the great vigor of his purpose.

It was hard to be just a cook!

Francelle vaguely wanted to give more. She wanted to stand waist deep in the foaming water and explore the schooner with Andrew. Perhaps it would be as good a place to live in as the hut had been. Once she saw it, she felt she could tell.

Francelle glanced around the hut. It was a friendly place here, secure, and with such a fine flooring. It would be hard to leave it, in a way. On a ship, uncertain things could happen.

Look—one moment the Cove was a sheet of solid steel, motionless in the shallows, restless and moving with a swell out farther. And again wind would strike the water, and whip it up into huge combing waves, fierce, with torn seaweed in them. Again rain would strike and puncture the flat gray of water with myriad silver dents. Or the sun fade out magically as a fog swept in from the sea. Then at night the changes! Clear stars, far-off lights of coasting vessels—maybe all night, or maybe again the fog, and the light from the windows of the hut pointing out like fingers into the mist. A wind in the pines . . .

Why had she never noticed the sky, the shapes of clouds before? Had Andrew's intense interest in them made them suddenly real, and an important part of the world?

Francelle turned the bacon . . . it was about done, and the ship's biscuit toasted brown the way Andrew liked it.

She stirred the oatmeal, and put the biscuits and bacon on the back of the little stove where they would stay warm.

She went out of the door to call Andrew. He did not answer.

She went to the cliff-head. He was not there. Finally she saw him. There he was, scrambling down

the last slope of the cliff, where it turned into dunes and beach grass.

He was going to go out on the bar to see the schooner. For the moment, she forgot her breakfast. Near where she stood, she found the binoculars, hanging by their lanyard strap to a twig on a scrub pine. She slowly worked the lenses in focus, and followed Andrew's course out the narrowing sand strip that made the bar. In places the foaming wash of the giant waves nearly covered the bar, but Andrew seemed to be watching the waves as he walked and able to foretell their breaking.

XV

THROUGHOUT the day, the wind gradually slackened in force, and the seas lost their combing crests. The sense of their almost human vindictiveness against the shore diminished.

To Andrew, down on the spume-blown beach, the ocean seemed to promise an eventual return to a surging ground swell. Waves rose before the shore, towered, and collapsed. They no longer seemed to be toppling forward, wind whipped, animate with malice.

It was not until darkness fell that Andrew climbed the cliff face—his body weary and spent from the nervous strain of watching. Francelle had not gone down during the day. Since the first storms of November, she had kept to the cliff. The roar of the surf on the beach seemed so unending that she was frightened, and found it better to stay where she was comfortable. There was something about the hut that soothed her. Perhaps it was the smooth floor that Andrew had laid with what choice planking had been left over from his little dory. That floor was so easy to keep clean—so pleasant to sweep with the broom.

Even with the excitement of the wreck, Francelle would not venture from the cliff. Through the glasses she would scan the shore for Andrew or look again at the slanting mast of the schooner and try to make out the shape of the hull—see how big the ship was.

Francelle knew Andrew would be tired when he came back. But she was not prepared for the sight of his face as it actually appeared in the doorway of the hut.

His eyes were sunken. They burned deep in his skull. His clothes were stained in fantastic patterns where spray had dried and the salt now showed in white streaks. His beard too had whitened.

In a way, Andrew's voice seemed to have taken on the hollowness of his eyes, though it, too, had an eager upturn now and then, and even in exhaustion, shared the brightness of his eyes.

Andrew spoke in monosyllabic response to Francelle's questions. He pulled up a bench near the stove. There he sat, hunched over, with his chin cupped in his hands and his cap pushed back on his head. He kept staring at the dull cherry glow of the iron sides of the stove.

"But the men," asked Francelle for the second time, "how did they get off?"

Andrew grunted. "Talked to the skipper a while. Showed him the way to Gifford down the beach. Met him on the shore when I got down."

"Was he upset about the wreck?"

"Just angry as hell," replied Andrew, and straightened up. He put his feet out in front of him, watching his boots steam slowly in the heat from the stove. He leaned back, and opened his shirt at the neck.

"Angry as hell," went on Andrew with a sigh. "Blamed it on the mate. Mate's a Swede. He didn't have anything to say except did I have any whiskey."

"Did you tell them about the hard cider at Jenkins's store?"

"Yes." Andrew's lips turned in a smile under his thick beard. "I guess it isn't the first time that pair have been through this together. Heard the skipper say, 'This is the *Princess Charlotte* all over again. You done it again.' I guess that pair got busted out of the gold braid class once."

Francelle helped Andrew get his boots off, and stuffed them with paper to dry. Then she brought him a bowl of thick soup.

The warmth of the soup and its savor brought out a sudden liveliness in Andrew.

He laughed. "Funny thing," he said, all of a sudden. "I read in one of those Sunday magazine supplements once that the human being was like a potato—about eighty percent water. But the real funny thing is this—that the blood in us—in you and me—has salts in it just like the salts in the ocean, just the same kind, and just the same proportion, one to the other."

Francelle was not interested. She wanted to hear about the schooner. But she yielded her moment's curiosity to a slight nod.

"Big scientist wrote it," went on Andrew. "Funny thing, I was thinking about that on the beach. Seems though we've changed a lot since we were fishes on a mud bank—I mean changed the things outside us."

"But inside," murmured Francelle, "we're kind of like that? I don't believe it. Else why couldn't we swim as far as we can walk?"

Andrew grunted. He was staring at the floor. It still rankled him that these good planks should be wasted on the hut floor.

"Guess I can rip these up again," he muttered to himself. He found his head nodding, and caught himself with a start. He rubbed his eyes with salt-stained knuckles till they stung.

"When are you going to begin work on the schooner, Andrew?" Francelle asked.

Andrew yawned. "Work all winter," he returned. "Cut trees down, skid 'em over to the cliff while the snow lasts. Got to have over a hundred and fifty trees—maybe a lot more. Can't tell yet."

Francelle's eyes opened wide. "Why—why so many of them, Andrew? Tell me what your plan is, won't you?"

"Too tired," murmured Andrew. "Not to-night. Some other time. Besides, I haven't had a good look at the schooner yet. Those boys must have just skinned through with luck, making their way down the bar. No use my going out there till I can have a good long look, and see how matters lie."

"When will we get to sea in her—do you think you could tell me that?" Francelle added a cup of steaming coffee to her persuasion. She had been alone all day, wondering about the schooner.

Andrew reached up and caught her arm. He pulled her down beside him on the bench, and leaned against her.

"Hard to get comfortable on this bench, Francelle. It's good you aren't boney. I'm tired."

"But we'll be off by the summer?" persisted Francelle.

Andrew shook his head. His face took on a serious cast.

"No, we won't get off till next November, the way I've got it figured. Listen, we got to give the natives here a chance, the insurance companies too. Probably they'll send down that big wrecking tug and try to yank her off. No, it'll be summer before we start living aboard her. Got to wait till they give her up as a total loss."

Andrew's head swayed on his shoulders.

He straightened up, sleepily. "Fill in the time cutting timber I guess." His voice trailed off. "Need a hundred and fifty logs anyway. Hell of a job for one man . . ."

Andrew was asleep now. He had set his half-finished coffee down, and his head was heavy on Francelle's shoulder.

She let it remain there. When she was sure he was asleep, she slipped off his sea-going cap, and smoothed his hair with her hand, shyly, tenderly.

Finally she half woke him, and guided him across the room to where their bunk was. His lanky body sprawled across it, one arm hanging down.

"Went to sleep quickly," thought Francelle as she moved about the room, picking up the dishes and putting away Andrew's outer clothes where they would dry

by the stove. As she walked, she was strangely conscious of Andrew's presence, there on the bunk. She kept looking over at him.

Finally she turned down the big cabin lantern that hung in the center of the room. She went to the window.

The sky was a clear, deep blue. The stars were out. Overhead, the moonlight streamed down on the hut and made a sharp shadow on the snow.

By the window, at the table, she leaned on her elbows, her eyes drinking in the queer bright radiance of the still world without. She went back to the bunk where Andrew lay, and looked down at him. What strange things he must have in his head.

XVI

THE sea subsided after the storm, and sank into regular low swells. The gray skies of winter hung silently over the cold water. Andrew gave many of his days to sitting alone on the cliff-head, staring down at his schooner through the glasses. Andrew was thinking.

After sitting so he would walk deep into the pine woods where the snow was soft, and his solitary presence was attested by each print of his boot. He would look at trees, now and then reaching down in his pocket for his clasp knife to have a notch at one of them that caught his eye. He had not yet been near his schooner.

Finally, came a day with a sudden, wide blue sky arched high overhead, one of those warm days that late January thaws carry into a miracle of transposed season.

In the bright light of this new morning the gulls swept out from the cliff face on the torn arc of their wings, and no wind opposed their flight. Sailing and circling in the air, they cried and screamed their pleasure.

On this day, before he had his breakfast, Andrew vanished over the edge of the cliff. Soon he was on the shore.

Ah! It was good to be here again on this clean shore. Close to the smell the gently curling rollers

gave the air! Close to the white pebbles that the transparent water moved back and forth with its urge.

Getting down close to the water was like coming close to the current of life, where the power the sea had over Andrew swept up into him and made him alive.

His eye roved restlessly toward where the wreck lay on her side, out on the bar, with her single mast pointing skyward at a sharp angle.

He would go out there this morning. Child-like, he had excused himself from an earlier trip, reasoning that nothing could be learned about the schooner or her position in all the welter of spray, with a high sea running. Pretending to this reasonableness against the fierce urge to see the schooner had pleased him.

But now, now he would go out to the bar and really see his ship, the craft the sea had provided him. He started walking down the shore, where the waves had washed the sand bare of ice and snow, and the beach was firm and wet under his feet. The tide was out.

He wore his cap squarely on his head, and noted the slightest oddities of flotsam on the beach. There were many strange pieces of driftwood piled up, odd beams the sea had rolled ashore, weathered and showing silvered lights where they had begun to bleach. There were curious shells of deep sea clams, a huge horseshoe crab. Strange colored kelp ripped from the very ocean floor now floated calmly with the low wave crests, shining in the transparent water.

How clean that ocean water seemed! How clean everything it touched! Truly, near these tides, a man

could live and be always clean inside. Not in a hut that would get thick with the smells of cooking. Nor in any city where men were carried huddled together in shrieking subway trains. That noise was as surely a poison as was ever poured from a bottle. Never a distance in towns and cities to satisfy the eye, to stretch it way out! Nor stillness in which the soul could find its point of rest, its peace. That was what had been lacking in the old life! Peace.

Andrew had known joy there, he had known grief. Both had come to him in that way of living. With so many thousand of his brothers. But never peace, the peace the ocean shore gave him.

He lifted up his head to the sky, and breathed the air in. It seemed to wash away the memories of that strained past.

"To hell!" Andrew suddenly muttered. It was time to be thinking about practical matters—the stranded schooner, not for dreaming.

In the bright light of the morning, the upturned side of the stranded schooner gleamed before him. Over her rail hung a tangled mass of shrouds and rigging, where the main mast had carried away.

When Andrew was near enough to her to actually read her name where it was painted across the sheer strake at her bows—*Polaris*—he had the first real thrill of his new possession. Suddenly, unaccountably, the fact of her presence, and of the presence too of the plan in his mind, coupled with a lightning flash of reality. The plan and the schooner!

There she was, and a beauty!

Black, with a green water line. Over a hundred feet long. And what a bow! The smooth curve of that bow that led off into a tapered bowsprit with lines as clean as a yacht—that was what took Andrew's breath away.

Gradually he approached that bow, stood at last beneath it, where it was thrust, high and dry over the sand. He stood there lost in wonder and love for his schooner.

Her name—*Polaris*—the navigator's name for the North Star—how beautiful that was! Ah, she would sail, that schooner, she would carry a man anywhere over the ocean.

Andrew's cheeks were wet with tears as he stretched out his hand to touch her hull. The reality of this actual schooner seemed to enter his body with that touch. Almost as if it had physically entered his body and become a part of him.

If a man should ever try to separate them—Andrew and this schooner—it would leave a bleeding wound that would never heal. Andrew dully sensed this fierce connection that had been forged between his body and this schooner. Now, perhaps, Andrew was no longer simply a man. This schooner's timbers and her beams had become fixed parts of him—in a way that suggested a mythological character—sprung out of the childhood of the race. A centaur-like creature, half man, half ship. . . .

By the cutwater stay, Andrew swung himself up onto

the bowsprit, and then to the slanting deck. Here he surveyed, calmly, the problem of her stranded position.

At first sight, the *Polaris* seemed but temporarily grounded. Now, even at low tide, her stern counter projected out into the shoal water. She lay sideways, at an angle to the straight run of the bar, and rested on her side and her keel. The lower rail was already deeply bedded in the sand.

Fortunately her keel had not been ripped out by the stranding.

Sailing close-hauled into the eye of the Northerly gale when she struck, she had been heeled far over. She had struck her bottom a glancing blow at the first impact, and then with her great momentum, had slid far up the shelving beach. She was less crushed, than caught. Like a fleet deer, tangled, still alive.

As Andrew walked down the deck he knew that she was hard and fast. By the high neap tides of the spring, her lower rail would be buried deep in the sand. Sand would fill in under her upturned side, and wedge her keel fast.

Andrew did not go below, but climbed down to the shore again and walked around the hull, thinking, speculating.

The more he observed, the more sure he was that this schooner could not be pulled off the bar with a wrecking tug, or dug out by a shovel gang. And yet his plan of salvage would work.

For look—a tug hitched to her, tightly bedded in the sand as she was—would pull her apart, tear the

stern timbers out of her, before the grip of the sands would let go her keel.

The shore of Shark Cove Andrew knew—the make-up of the bar he knew—fine sand and then dark mud mixed with even finer grains. Embedded in this wet sand the suction alone would hold that hull tight. That was why other wrecks had evaded the most powerful tugs along this part of the coast, and had remained where they struck, their timbers gradually to be sucked into the heart of this ravenous shore, and their upper hull to be battered and wrenched and crushed by the onslaught of Easterly storms.

She would last the winter without breaking up, Andrew reckoned at length. If there were not too severe a series of storms from the East, she would stay together till the summer, when Andrew could hope to actually get his plan under way.

A Northerly storm, such as the one she had gone ashore in, would not be so dangerous. It was the gale from the East that would roll in towering combers against her hull, waves with giant strength to split and crush and bury all that lay in their path.

Would the salvage crews the insurance companies sent—would these people get through their silly attempts to move the hull off early in the summer?

Would they give him time?

The season for Easterly gales would come early the following winter—in November particularly. Would these fools give up in time for Andrew to start his work—and get far enough on with it before fall should

pass into winter, and he have his plan and work perfected?

It was thinking far ahead, but Andrew saw his problem clearly.

Well, it was no use facing all that now. Andrew understood very well that he must start none of his work on the schooner until she had been given up as a total loss, and finally abandoned.

He climbed back up the deck from the beach, and went below, down the companionway stair. As he entered the cabin, he saw the after part of the ship was flooded—her seams open to the tide. Well, that would be a job, caulking those seams!

Hanging over a shelf against the wall, Andrew found a lantern. He finally had it lighted and was slopping about in the stagnant water, pushing away a floating sea chest, clearing a sodden mattress from his path.

As a lover will find beauty from the face of his beloved with his finger tips, as a sculptor can know through his lingering touch on the chiseled stone the truth of his work, so Andrew, inch by inch, worked his way forward from the horn timbers at the stern to the breast hooks of the bow. Feeling, groping with his fingers from the bilge up to the waterline, Andrew came to know the skin of that hull.

The size of the cabin, the neat arrangement of the galley, the good cargo space down the forward hatch—all these he took in dimly. They registered faintly on his happiness—he was reassured rather than amazed

by the nicety of their arrangement. For the eye that had conceived the line of that bow, that eye would fail nowhere else, for it must have been the eye of a master shipwright.

The size and shape of the ribs, the struts, the deck knees—all these Andrew was putting down in his memory. Where new timbers would be needed, where beams saved from the barge would fit and strengthen the crushed lower side. Except on that starboard side, all the timbers seemed sound. Now and again the planking had been sprung.

When Andrew had finished his inspection of the hull, he climbed up to the deck again.

He paused by the foremast that was still standing, and looked at the crack that ran up it. The shock of stranding with the weight of sail driving against it, had run a wide crack about ten feet up from the deck. Andrew shook his head. It wouldn't stand the strain of sails again. A new foremast as well as mainmast! That was a job—cutting and planing smooth a mast!

Well, possibly two small jury masts would serve, when the time came to clear the Cove. They would not be so difficult to step and rig, working all alone as he would have to, with just Francelle. Between them, the jury masts could be handled.

Andrew glanced up at the sun. Its low arc across the southern sky had passed meridian—it was afternoon! Andrew realized with a shock the time he had spent below.

He went aft, and sat down near the wheel. He was hungry, and yet he did not want to leave this deck that was so dear to him.

He threw his arm up over the wheel box and fondled the spokes, as if in caress. . . .

Where there was no mast, there seemed now to be one in Andrew's fancy. Through his half-closed eyes, he saw the sails too, he saw his *Polaris* heeled over in a fresh breeze, sailing in the wide ocean, parting the waves with a flawless beauty.

For over an hour he remained this way, with his arm over the wheel. The exhaustion of the morning's work left him. The cramped positions he had crawled into relaxed their strain on his muscles. Even hunger abated in the strange peace that filled him.

Overhead the sea birds screamed and whirled, and beneath him, under the stern, the flood tide rippled and murmured as the waves slid up around the hull.

XVII

BEFORE the winter storms were over, Andrew found that in planning to give these months to cutting timber, he had miscalculated. The waves working against the schooner daily imperiled her. Without almost constant attention, bracing and caulking, the storms would have broken her up. The foremast had to be cut away, and the after deck supported. It was difficult exhausting work, often in the dark of the hold, wet, with clothes freezing and hands going numb.

But at length the fog and spring rains came. The hardships of the winter began to dwindle in the warming sun. Provisions were running low, and Andrew had to make several trips to Gifford in April for supplies. He sailed over in the dory, and made a night stay in the town at Mrs. Spielfogel's.

Here instant curiosity attached to his presence. There were questions about Francelle. Andrew thought it best to keep the town gossip as quiet as possible about him, and so he told them he and Francelle had gone to Boston and were married. They were building a house at the Cove—the fishing would be good there, and they did not mind the isolation.

Several times Publicoaver engaged Andrew in conversation about the wreck of the *Polaris*. Andrew admitted to no ambition to salvage her. Possibly when

she had been given up by the insurance companies, he would find some of her planking useful. Did Publicoaver, as insurance agent in the town, know what plans there were?

No, Publicoaver knew nothing. He glanced at Andrew suspiciously and was silent. In their hearts, both men knew there would be a struggle between them for the possession of that schooner in the coming summer months.

And so Andrew would carry down to his dory a few sacks of flour, sides of bacon, potatoes, sugar, and a treat of fresh eggs and some beef, and depart as he had come, in the dory.

Meanwhile at the Cove, he started to cut timber in the woods, leaving Francelle to keep an eye out to warn him of any visitor.

In June a large steel wrecker from New London made the first attempt to pull the *Polaris* off. On the day preceding the attempt, surveyors went over the hull and analyzed her position from every angle.

Andrew watched their maneuvers from the cliff nervously. The tug remained anchored off the bar the night of her arrival. The following day a line was run ashore and made fast to the schooner. The first hawser parted when the wrecking tug put her strain on it. Then a steel towing cable was substituted, and at flood tide that afternoon the tug churned the water again in an attempt to pull her loose from the grip of the sand.

This time the cable did not part, but from the signals

of the men Andrew understood that the hull could not stand the strain. That night kedge anchors were dropped, and the wrecker steamed out to sea again, apparently having given up the operation as entailing more expense than the schooner was worth.

The following day, however, Publicoaver appeared with a crew from Gifford. For these operations Andrew took his position on a dune, down on the beach, where he could call out an occasional word of encouragement.

For two weeks Publicoaver and his men labored. They had set up a shanty on the beach and a power boat brought them supplies and took the men into Gifford Saturday night.

First Publicoaver tried to winch the schooner off by tightening on the kedge anchors the wrecker had left. Then he tried a system of canals and dredging with a plow. But it was hopeless effort. What sand could be shoveled out and furrowed away during the day, by the next morning had filled in again.

Toward the end of these efforts there was some talk of bringing up a sand-sucker and dredging a channel to free her. But the nearest sand-sucker was in Boston and the expense of that operation would probably be more than the hull was worth.

For a time Andrew watched these efforts closely and talked with the men, although Publicoaver avoided him. Once or twice he even lent a hand to show his good will and supplied the crew with several tackles.

Then Andrew grew impatient, and bored with Pub-

licoaver's stupid persistence. However, he was unable to go on with his own work of felling trees while these men were about. They might guess his plan.

And so Andrew went cruising in the dory, realizing the hard days in store for him, and getting his fill of sleep and rest. Francelle went with him several times to the small islands further down the coast and they camped there for the night—to sail back the succeeding day.

Finally, one morning Andrew and Francelle came back to find the Cove deserted.

Publicoaver had given up!

The first thing Andrew did was to post a letter to his friend Tony, McGregor's assistant in the office, and tell him that he was "on the beach." Andrew spoke of the wreck and how he had observed the failure of salvage work so far. Would Tony write him right away and inform him if she had been now given up as a total loss?

Andrew wanted to begin living aboard the schooner, but first he wanted to be sure she had been abandoned.

After a week passed, Andrew went to the post office in Gifford. There were three letters for him.

The first was the note from Tony saying he had looked up the *Polaris* and found she was listed as a total loss, no salvage. The letter then went on describing the situation in the office and how possibly soon he would have McGregor's job. Why in the world had Andrew run away so suddenly, leaving no word of where he was bound? The next note was from Mc-

Gregor. It was simply phrased, and written in McGregor's fine hand. It offered Andrew his job back and enclosed a ten-dollar money order.

Andrew was touched. McGregor was a kind man. . . .

But—the reek of that office! Andy could smell the stale cigarette smoke. . . .

He looked up at the sky over the narrow street of Gifford, and smelled the sea air gratefully. These houses were clean. Everything was clean that was touched by the sea. The men who had built these houses had been sea captains. Poor McGregor, he just didn't know this kind of a world. Nor, probably, could he be happy in it.

Andrew resolved that if things should turn out badly, and he lose the schooner, he would come to live in a town like this. Never would he go back to the office.

Andy almost forgot his third letter.

Walking back down to the wharf, he pulled it out from his pocket. The handwriting was unfamiliar. Opening it curiously, Andrew found a fancily initialed correspondence card.

Instinctively he raised it to his nose. It was heavily scented! All it said was, "When are you coming back to New York?" Andrew looked at it again, puzzling over the initials of the signature.

With a burst of laughter, he recognized his correspondent. That telephone operator! So!

Andrew chuckled to himself as he untied his dory

and pushed off from the dock. So that little devil remembered him. Without ever believing he would see her again, with that kind of glee only a sailor can have, all the way back to the Cove he kept thinking of her, imagining victorious situations. Now and then he would pull out the note and sniff it to renew his ardor. But when he was off the bell buoy to the East of the Cove he pitched it over the gunwale into the sea.

The ebbing tide absorbed his attention now as he worked the dory in toward shore, skillfully playing against its current. It was nearly two hours before Andrew beached the dory by the schooner and called out to Francelle.

She came down to the edge of the water to meet him, and Andrew kissed her with more than usual warmth. With his arm about her, Andrew walked up the shore with Francelle, explaining the letter from Tony, and that it meant from now on the schooner was theirs.

It was late June. They would move aboard as soon as Andrew could clean out the cabin and make it dry and livable.

Francelle's interest kindled keenly at this forward step.

"It will be fine," she said, "to have a place to fix up that's going to last! Where we'll live for good."

That night after supper they fell to talking of plans again and of the future when they would sail where they wished. Of the schooner, too, and the changes that would be made in the cabin.

"Tell me," said Francelle, "why do you need to cut so many logs?"

Andrew was feeling in good spirits to-night. It was on the tip of his tongue to go on and answer Francelle's question—tell her his plan. How, where others had failed, he had a way to succeed.

To-night, as they sat in the hut doorway together with the wide warm June night about them, Francelle seemed utterly desirable to Andrew. Was it the note from the telephone operator that had started him thinking of amorous affairs? Or was his mood the product of the weeks of leisure passed in the warm sun, resting, waiting?

Andrew loved Francelle, he knew.

It was all very well to say he valued her for the cooking, for what she contributed to his life, but she gave him more too. The sensitive, supple spirit in her had the gift of comradeship. Out of their daily living together had grown a feeling Andrew knew was beautiful.

He picked up her hand and smoothed her arm under his palm for a moment.

"Yes, Francelle," Andrew began, "I want to tell you all about my plan now. Perhaps you will think of something. Before—what was the use of speaking of it? I was not sure of everything—I was not ready—"

"And now," put in Francelle, "you're ready. In a few days—to-morrow, you'll start."

Andrew nodded. "You remember the way a sea rolls in against that bar with an Easterly storm? Like

last November? Everything depends on those waves."

Andrew was silent, trying to work into ready phrases what had dwelt so long in his mind, the plan to which he had so gradually added each detail.

He began to talk again, quietly. He must go on slowly, because it was such a simple plan at bottom. In a way it was like having the laugh on the ocean.

"You remember they thought of putting a sand-sucker to work to make a channel around her? Well, I plan to do the same thing. Only my sand-sucker won't be a dredging barge with a lot of pumps and gear on it. It is a simpler idea. The force of the waves and current against a temporary breakwater will do it."

Francelle broke in. "I understand your idea, but how will a breakwater do the trick?"

"I'll begin by driving a ring of piles around the schooner," Andrew explained. He found a few small twigs which he thrust into the sandy earth to show just how the piles were to be set. A pine cone stood for the ship.

"Then into the sand I'm going to drive pine planks slantwise, loosely, and tie them in place. I'll be able to reach the plank ends and the tops of the piles from the schooner's deck with a long-handled sledge. When the waves hit those planks, they'll slowly work loose at the foot, see—"

Andrew hastily tore off some strips from a cardboard carton and illustrated how it was all going to work. "As they come free, these piles and planks will loosen the sand at the base. There'll be an undertow sucking

back. The waves will eat out the beach. Bit by bit!"

Francelle had watched every movement of Andy's hands intently. Her first interest in the schooner seemed kindled now to an enthusiasm almost the equal of Andrew's.

"As the planks work loose," she cried, "you'll hammer them down with the sledge! From the deck of the schooner."

"Exactly. I've watched the current, and studied the charts. I'm not sure but that this whole sickle of land that makes out won't be eaten away. Mark my words, the ocean only needs to be started—and then—a great force has been put in play. Greater than the power of any man's arms or any steam shovel or any sand-sucker. It's the best way to get the schooner off, and the first winter storm will do it!"

"But if you should miss—if you should be wrong—" put in Francelle hesitantly. "You are gambling—"

Andy shrugged his shoulders. "I know very well the ocean may spring an unforeseen trick on me. If we lose, that's a thing I've not thought about at all. If the breakwater should fail, or if the currents change, we'll lose the schooner. The storm would crush her quickly once it had eaten its way toward her through the beach.

"I'll have to work quickly," Andy went on, "and it will be exhausting. Maybe it will be two or three days before she comes afloat. And when she comes off, then we'll have to get sail on her and beat over to the other side of the Cove, way in, where there's some

shelter. We could anchor there till the storm blows out."

For a long time they were both silent. Finally Andrew noticed Francelle nodding to herself. She turned toward him and leaned back on her elbow.

"Oh, I hope you'll get away with it!" she said. "I think it's a swell idea."

"I think it's a good idea," Andrew answered. "Once on the South American coast we were able to move a much bigger ship than this schooner off a bar the same way. All that worries me is this: will there be time?"

"It's nearly July now," put in Francelle.

"I know, and more than half the piles are yet to be cut. They'll all have to be driven in, let alone the rigging to be done on the ship, and the caulking of her seams. And then, there's a lot of painting too. Painting a ship always starts out easy. But it can get tiresome as hell. Your arm certainly does get tired."

"But I could do some of that painting," suggested Francelle. "There's no reason why I couldn't."

After Andrew and Francelle had talked themselves out they lapsed into silence, each into the current of their own thoughts.

The stars were bright in the night sky now, and Andrew rose to go to bed. The great work would begin on the following day—work Andrew foresaw would tax his utmost strength.

Francelle suggested some pilot crackers with the fresh milk Andy had brought from Gifford. Over the light meal their talk grew gay again and they both

laughed over very trifling matters indeed. And that night they were happy in bed together—happier than they had ever been before.

The following day Andrew decided to begin on the schooner. He would spend July, and August too, if necessary, working to make her tight and livable. There would follow then the cutting of the timber for the breakwater, the piles, getting all their supplies aboard, and finally facing the storm that would be the challenge of the ocean for final possession of the schooner. If only the weather would hold fair . . . so much depended on that to properly sink those piles for the breakwater.

And so into July the work went on. The sound of the buck-saw, of mallet on caulking iron, filled the air of the Cove. By the middle of August Andy was cutting timbers for the breakwater, and they were living aboard the schooner. The main work on the hull was done. But the breakwater was yet to be set up in place. And soon the summer would be fading.

The August fogs came, early morning fogs that bespeak the blazing days to follow. Andrew was up and about early on these mornings. His face had taken on hard lines of purpose and concentration.

Seldom indeed did Andy play little jokes like the red carpet now. Only once did Francelle come on him in a moment of undiluted diversion. It was on one of these foggy mornings.

Andrew had found an unusually large conch shell on the beach the day before. He had sawed off its

end, and fitted the opening to his mouth, to make a fog-horn out of its curving voluted passageway.

Francelle had been wakened by an unbelievedly weird bellow, that sounded like a dying cow. Rushing to the deck, she found Andy seated in the stern, with his cap pushed far back on his head, and the fog blowing in around him. He was practicing with his fog-horn.

XVIII

SEPTEMBER came, and with the exception of the fog, Andrew remained fortunate with the weather. The bell buoy off the Cove could be heard very faintly, that was all. With each wave passing under that buoy, the great iron hammers swung and struck the bell. In an Easterly wind of the preceding winter the clangs had carried clearly. But the wind held in the Southwest. Occasionally it shifted up toward the North at dawn and sunset.

In the morning at the head of the Cove Andrew still swung and cut with his ax—in a morning at least a dozen trees would topple now under his expert aim. Then they would be stripped of their branches and twigs. Then Andrew would roll them to the cliff and spill them over to the beach. As he rolled each log to the edge, Andrew kept his eye on the scroll of clouds that always floated on the Eastern horizon these mornings.

The afternoon Andy spent placing the outermost piles from the raft and starting their tops down. Andrew found it almost impossible to swing his sledge from his insecure footing and have his aim strike true. More than once with anger at the slippery pile top, Andrew would lift up that sledge and come down with it hard enough to feather out the wood. Then he

missed and was thrown backward from the raft by the force of the free hammer.

By floating the piles from beach to the bar where he needed them, Andrew found the tide at certain turns carried them well. Andrew made that tide work wherever he could.

When Andrew chopped he thought most. Placing the piling and driving it home was simply mean work. Wet, exasperated, bruised and angry, a man couldn't think. But up on the cliff, with all the Cove shining below and his ax biting into wood, Andrew thought a great deal . . . *September, October, November,* rang through his head with each stroke of the ax. Andrew caught himself repeating childish rhymes too—*To-day I brew, to-morrow I bake, the next day the queen's child I shall take!* He would repeat these many times while selecting the next tree. Or he would look again at the scroll of clouds to see if it was lifting, listen for the clang of the bell buoy which would mean a wind veering to the Eastward.

All through October the water was peaceful. In the morning a haze over the low surf, and on the beach and the deck of the ship, a light dew. Up on the cliff, the goldenrod stalks slowly grew more yellowed and brittle with the frosts. Back of the woods Andrew could see patches of open field turning brown.

September, October, November . . . Andy would swing his ax into a tree. Andy would remember his plan. He must simply follow it out. He would keep on cutting. It's a great thing for a man to work to a plan.

Gives him confidence. Each time the gash of the opening bark showed all white against the black of the trunk that spelt going ahead. Andrew's hands grew hot from the sting of the ax haft in them, they burned at night after he was in his bunk. But there was always good food at night, and Francelle happier now they were living on board and she had a place to fix up.

Oh, Andy could swing the ax! Into the soft wood it sank, and out fell a new chunk. In went the ax. Each swing drove it in. Straight at the core now. Up aloft, against the sky, the top branches shivered with each stroke. Andrew's arm and back turned and swung. Wide and high now, with these last swings, giant strokes at the end with the last breath left in him, the impact of the ax each time forcing a gasp out of his chest. Such a pleasant tug the ax haft gives as you swing up—then, as you swing down again, the ax is so free from weight! Then the steel strikes in. A loud crack. Then Andy would run back a few steps to stand clear. Followed quickly the rush of the upper branches through the air—like the wings of rising marsh birds, or geese close to your head. More snapping and parting, and a final sweep carries the tree to the earth. . . .

At night when he was tired, and his eyes seemed heavy and bleared, Francelle would ask Andrew questions.

Did he really believe in his plan? Oh, yes, Andy had seen a bulkhead tear out fifty yards of beach at Coney Island. He had seen one storm build it in again.

Must he work so hard? There would be time for rest later. The ocean did not make you a present of a ship like the *Polaris,* with such a bow as she had, every month in the year.

Francelle was changing. . . . These questions reflected that change subtly.

Andrew couldn't say just when the fear that Francelle would leave began to grow on him. It was so gradual, and they had so little talk together these days, that it was more from her questions that he had to tell, than from anything she said straight out.

Just to look at her, in these last days of October, you would have thought her the most happy and contented person in the world. She had less to say about stitches in her side, in cooking she seldom burned herself now, for she was used to moving about in the galley that was slanted, finding her balance in the tilted hull. Perhaps any one else coming on board would not have noticed anything.

If Francelle seemed beautiful when she was working for the Big One, she was now new and more wonderful to look at. . . . Andrew saw her now partly through the haze of his great fatigue, through the pain of his aching back and burning palms at night.

But he saw her, and she was beautiful to him. Though many times he had to put her beauty out of his mind, and go to sleep instead.

At the Cove, she wore Andrew's white duck trousers and a blue pea jacket. From a distance maybe you would have thought her a man, for her hair was

bobbed and she wore it slicked back on her head, out of the way. The salt water made it stick in place, she used to tell Andrew. Francelle was always slim, but this living at the Cove with so much time to herself and plenty of food, had made her more round.

Often Andrew came on her, standing on the after-deck of the schooner, looking off towards the sea as he returned up the beach. She seemed so beautiful, so *rare*, as he saw her that way on the deck.

When you were close to her you noticed her eyes were clear and quick. They seemed less asleep, and to have lost, for the most part, their passive look. Not that Francelle ever became assertive. But she seemed more alive. . . .

There was something parching about the noonday sun along the narrow strip of sand between sheets of water. All that Andrew saw withered by the frost, choked by sand, or twisted by former winds, seemed to flower in Francelle. From looking out over that wind-swept stretch of sand and water, Francelle's face was tanned. About her eyes, and in the wrinkles of her low brow, tiny white lines had formed. She was a flower in this sunbeaten, naked land. . . .

One warm day Andrew came to the schooner earlier than usual, for he wanted time to examine several pieces of rigging and gear before lunch and the ensuing work on the breakwater. He saw Francelle go in swimming, and of all the pictures that were in his mind of Francelle, it seemed as though this would stay long-

est . . . Andrew noticed her as he came up the beach, walking by the edge of the water.

Clams, Andrew thought, she is looking for air holes and will be digging them after lunch. Or perhaps she is simply watching the curious collection of things that the sea rolls at its margin, strips of bright-colored kelp, shells, odd stones, and pieces of driftwood from old vessels breaking up on the outer bar.

As he came nearer, Andrew noticed she had rolled up her trousers and had taken off her shoes and woolen socks. Now and then as she walked she would fleck the water with her bare foot, and Andrew would see the shower of bubbles and spray. The sun, if you looked at it, seemed surrounded with a burning radiance.

Andrew saw her dip her hands in the water, he saw her as she bent down several times. Ah, it was cold maybe, in the deeper part of the beach ledge. The shallow pools she had been stepping in until now had been warmed by the beating sun. The low surf broke and slid up around her ankles. Suddenly she splashed her face with a double handful of water scooped up. Andrew saw her shake her head as though in joy from it, and run along a few steps, laughing to herself.

For several minutes then she appeared undecided and first retreated to the dry hot sand as though to slip off her clothes, and then paused and returned to the edge again.

Andrew had it on the tip of his tongue to call out to her to wait. He would come in too, for he was hot, and his flannel shirt itched. But something stopped him

from calling out. . . . He saw her slip her clothes off. In the flash of an eye she went running straight into the cold surf. She swam out a few strokes, over the breaking crests. Andrew sat down to watch her.

Very soon she had enough of it, and came running out of the water, her skin red and pink all over from the chill of the ocean. She quickly dried herself and slipped shivering into her trousers and coat. She turned up the pea coat collar as though it was December and the sand scattered wildly under her feet as she made for the rope ladder that led up over the side of the sloping hull. Once on deck, she hurriedly disappeared down the companionway ladder.

Ha, she wanted to be by the fire in the drum stove!

That water was cold, Andrew knew it. Did he not stand waist deep hammering at pile tops for several hours every afternoon, and capsize his raft a dozen times after that?

"Ha, ha," Andy thought, "you're such a little child, scampering over the sand that way with some lively game going on in your little head, that you alone know. Don't you have a great time by yourself, chasing around this way like a wild animal?"

XIX

ANDREW remained on the beach after Francelle had gone down into the hull, thinking, and letting the sand run through his fingers. Here he was so near a ship that had a bow like no other he had ever seen.

He was near the life of a woman too. A woman involved and wonderful, like the curves of a sea shell. You could go through your whole life without ever having either one, Andy reflected. And here he had both.

Andrew's fingers fell to playing with hollow straws of beach grass. Before he knew it, he had set them up in a row around a charred piece of wood. He fell to rehearsing what would happen when the storm from the East struck, and the winter ocean claimed again this peaceful shore as its own for good, and bombed the sand with surf.

Heaven's sake, how he would have to work! Like fifty men in a hundred places it would be. Andrew glanced up from his model to the quiet form of the schooner, and her short dark shadow on the sand. . . . He saw her decks awash, and himself running from side to side, dodging the combers to have a whack at a loosened pile with his sledge, to drive it deeper. He saw the schooner with her masts, and the sails all bent on, ready to run up the moment she shivered clear of

her tight bed, and her keel came free with water under it!

In just a few days now he would step the masts. It was dangerous to have gone on this long without them, but the weather had held fair, and the breakwater had proved a tedious and long job to do. Still, if he had worked like ten men these last weeks, later he would work like fifty! Oh, Andrew knew what was coming. . . .

Just now, as once before, thinking of what there was to do after seeing Francelle, feeling her, Andrew felt his strength well up in his chest, and burn across the back of his neck. He could do it! His strength would stretch ten times as far as it had.

Andrew felt that for sure. He tightened up the muscles in his arms as he lay out there in the hot sand, with the cool breeze drifting in across his face. See how the veins stood out! His bare arms were never like that before, never before so tight and powerful.

Andrew stood up and walked toward the ship. He'd tell Francelle what was in him. He'd tell her he knew he could do it, and she would believe him as never before. He would take her in his arms and lift her off the floor and kiss her. She would know then that he would win.

Instead of going up the rope ladder, Andrew scorned it, and pulled himself up, hand over hand, by a hanging rope's end. He swung up over the rail to the deck. . . .

"What a funny child, Francelle," he thought, "to be

running about the beach naked, and laughing to yourself as though you were playing a game! Dashing out that way into the cold water all of a sudden!"

Andrew came down the companionway stair into the cabin and walked forward between the bunks that lined the walls here, past the table, up to the galley. He must have come into the galley suddenly, for Francelle gave a start as she saw him and her cheeks flushed.

She had on a blue flannel shirt and was stirring the stew pot.

Andrew wanted to take her in his arms and tell her all he knew.

"Come, Francelle," he said, "let the cooking alone for a time and come on deck."

She hesitated a moment. Why should she hesitate? Would not a stew simmer for several hours without attention?

"I was just thinking . . ." she began, and then seemed confused. Suddenly she seemed to want to be rid of him. Oh, Andrew could tell. Francelle didn't need a printed invitation to come to the Cove, nor one to stay. She did not need to speak right out for Andy to understand she wanted him to be gone. Andrew understood Francelle's wish; she had been thinking one of her dreams and he had interrupted her.

"Very well," he said patiently. "How soon will we be ready to eat?"

"In a few moments," replied Francelle.

So Andrew went on up to the deck. He had always found it hard to ask for a woman's favor. Perhaps

he was too proud. As he turned away he was hurt inside. He would have felt better to have kissed Francelle and played with her a time.

Oh, well . . .

Oh, well, indeed! It was hard enough for Andrew to walk out of the galley that time, with all the feeling that was in him about his schooner. It was hard.

Andrew sat down on the deck and amused himself for a while letting the rusty nails he carried in his pocket dribble from one hand to the other. The breeze seemed to be freshening and he felt it on his back. He settled in the lee of the deck house, out of range of the wind, and continued to count out the nails and put them in little piles.

Andrew felt superstitious about those nails he carried. He started to feel that way in Peru. With them in his hand it was not hard to remember the time when he was working through the jungle rivers, striking for the coast. For part of that trip he had been alone. Then he had wondered whether he would suddenly cease to be able to talk. He tried to talk to the trees, often he could call out to the monkeys overhead, and they would answer with their idiotic chattering. Andrew had a supply of old nails which he kept in his pocket and which he used when he had to construct a raft.

Andrew fell to jingling these nails in his pocket, because any noise that smacked of civilization was pleasant. The natives had a trick of tying up their log rafts with vines and tough grasses. He had never had much

luck with that. So he treasured his nails and used them to nail logs together over and over again. He finally fell to talking with them. At least they were reasonable and not like the monkeys and savages and savage ways which always depressed him after a time, made his head ache.

And so, perhaps, it was not altogether superstitious for Andrew to have kept these nails with him, living out on the deserted stretch of Shark Cove. It was reasonable, for the world is a lonely place when there are not many humans near; perhaps a man may think he prefers it that way—but still, he wouldn't like to lose the knack of talking. That treacherous ape—vegetarian ancestry!

Andrew kept pouring the nails back and forth from one hand to another, and thinking about those distant days when he had jumped ship on the jungle coast.

After a while his thought was interrupted. Francelle appeared on deck and swung up the iron stew pot after her.

Andrew felt better for the consolation his nails had been to him—after all they had sustained him in more lonely places than this—so he watched her with a smile, and all his itch to love her quiet in him. When a man gets tied to an idea, perhaps he has to be lonely, thought Andy.

Francelle put her finger in the stew to find its temperature. Of course, that was a silly thing to do! Whoever would think of putting their finger into a

stew right off the stove! But it showed Andy that Francelle too had something on her mind.

She pulled her finger out with a sharp cry. Andrew bandaged it for her in an old bandanna wet with cold sea water. While he was making a neat job of the knot, Francelle's eye fell on the pile of nails he had left.

"Andrew," she said impatiently, "you play with those nails just like a kid. It makes me tired to see you doing such a thing. And the way you smile when you put them back in your pocket."

Andy thought he would try to turn it into a joke.

"Oh, well," he said, "those nails are our crew—a good twenty-five iron men that the ocean knows nothing about—here to help us when the big time comes." He bent over her finger to knot the bandage with his teeth. "You'll be glad enough for them later."

She drew her hand away and muttered something under her breath that Andy did not hear. He asked her to say it again.

She looked at Andrew for a second with a kind of scornful hate in her eyes that struck him way down inside with a deep pain. Oh, to see her look that way! It was wrong! Whatever had she on her mind, to act this way?

"Crew!" she muttered. "That's about the size of it. Here we'll sit till a storm comes and drowns us at night! Oh, to be drowned in that place, like rats, with never a chance!" Andrew saw her shiver. "A man that plays with nails."

"Listen, Francelle," Andrew put in with a quiet voice. "If it weren't for the tide floating my logs over, where would we be? And the waves that will dig us out. I thought of both those ideas, sitting idle and playing with the nails you make so much fun of. My nails are like the beads of a rosary—you wouldn't make fun of a sister or a priest, surely?"

"A gang of Portuguese with shovels is what you want here!"

Andrew reasoned on. "No, they could do nothing. Did not Publicoaver try, and with plows? He who has so much reason to get square with this place, as you yourself said? No, I tell you it's all in the plan, in the idea. You can see that for yourself if you'll stop and think."

She shook her head hard and Andrew thought he saw tears in her eyes as she turned her face away from him.

He foolishly went on. "The only way to get the sand out of this bar and clear the keel is to reverse the process that put it here. The breakwater will do that. The sea and the wind are peculiar. You can't beat them unless you go their way. That's my idea. To look at the cards, then gamble."

As he thought, and Francelle said nothing, Andrew became indignant.

"Hell," he cried out. "Portuguese with shovels! Wait till you see how things move here when these waves start in business on a large scale. You can't imagine it. To compare them with Portuguese is ab-

solute foolishness. You have never seen these waves close to."

Francelle suddenly turned toward Andrew and pounded her foot on the deck. She was half crying, and her words came in gasps. He couldn't make out whether it was anger at his persisting with an explanation, or just her own dammed-up emotions. Then she broke into words.

"It's not that!" she cried out. "It's not that." Then suddenly she calmed. "It's you."

Andrew was surprised, all right. Something he had done?

"No, it's you and this ship," she went on. It was so difficult for her to go on! But she did. "When you love me, you speak of the schooner. If you are not working you sit as though you were dead." She stepped back hurriedly. "Oh, don't try to kiss me now!" she cried out, "I am not a whore!"

Andrew was staggered indeed with all she said, and inside he cried for time to answer her. At first he had an impulse to tell her why he talked about the schooner to her, that he cared so much for her, that was why he shared his great hope with her. But no, she wanted to be loved for herself. It suddenly dawned on Andrew that was it.

In her talks with him about Publicoaver, and Perkins, she had been so frank with Andrew, he thought she must have a distaste for the very word love if she should hear it. Andrew had sometimes fancied she stayed at the Cove because he never went on about

love. She was so hard boiled about men! Many times she told Andrew how she had to fight free from them, how she hated men "that pawed her." Andrew was tired of hearing her repeat that phrase.

He had held in any emotion he had felt for Francelle. He hadn't talked about love for so long he was shy. He did not know how, he couldn't speak out. It had become a habit: with this woman Andrew simply avoided words about themselves, and how he felt. Surely they did not need words to get along together, they were more free, more clean of that vocabulary of love words that is like a city tenement, crowded, worn out.

Now when he tried to make her see what he felt, Francelle fought him off with a cry that she was not a prostitute. He could not buy her silence and agreement with a kiss.

How to answer her, and she, standing, looked right through him with her eyes!

"Well," Andrew remarked slowly, "what can we do about it? You mean you are tired of the life here at the Cove. That is really it. I suppose the Big One is still in business at Gifford." Andrew was without hope, he knew he could say nothing of what was in him, how he would miss the sight of Francelle, and how vacant the cabin would be at night with a winter wind whistling across the deck overhead. So he forced himself into a practical view of matters.

"Do you want to go there?" he asked.

Francelle gave a sigh, and walked away from him

toward the far rail and stood for some time, facing into the wind, looking off at the horizon.

As he watched her Andrew felt sure she was going to leave the schooner. Something in the way she stood told him she was thinking of that. She had a way of standing, with her shoulders slightly drawn, did Francelle. Andrew remembered seeing it before in the restaurant when the Big One annoyed her.

The grief that kept swelling up in him, like one wave after another, seemed to have no end. They stood silent, those two, on the deck. Hardships, the simple things of living, the very simple things had drawn them close to each other in ways that neither fully knew.

The sunlight seemed less golden than it had only an hour before. It was a paler yellow where it cut across the water toward the schooner, and the wind, even in the middle of the day, carried a lingering chill in its occasional gusts. Familiar signs of the fall returning, winter coming.

If Francelle went, Andrew now thought, the paling sun making him practical with a desperate feeling, heaven's sake, he'd be left alone to face the weather! His own cooking to do!

After a time Francelle came over to him. Her eyes looked tired, and with a curious warm dullness in them, as she stared at him.

In a voice so low Andrew had to strain to hear it, she spoke.

"I think I'll take a little walk." She went toward the rope ladder that dropped to the sand. "Don't worry if

I should be late in coming back. You can warm the stew for your supper."

And so she went, and from that curious warm dullness in her eyes Andrew knew she would come back . . .

Just as a wave runs back down the slanting sand, emotion withdrew from Andrew as Francelle disappeared. All he could do was to remember he had had no lunch. He glanced at the stew pot without appetite, as Francelle's small feet were working their way down the sand.

XX

WHEN rain came to Shark Cove, the dunes were pitted with the marks of the drops. The sand was wet and cold, even in summer. The gulls were stopped from their screeches, and everything was desolate and dripping.

Now gust after gust of rain swept in from the open sea and scattered over the narrow bars and drifted on. It could set a man thinking about his life to live through the rain at night in Shark Cove, and hear the sound of it on the water and over the sand. . . .

The afternoon that Francelle left, Andrew worked hard, and as he worked he was frightened. Suppose now that he was alone he should begin to find himself working without heart?

Oh, he was afraid of that! No man or horse or other animal can stand long unless his heart beats strong in him, knocks its sound right up into his ears. . . . And Andrew saw the wind was veering sharply to the Southeast. He felt rain in the air as that afternoon wore on, and he grew afraid. Afraid of little slight noises, of the tide bumping a log suddenly up under the stern of the schooner. His hands were shaky now and then when he heard that dull, regular sound come out of the slow purling of the surf. It seemed like a great drum, beginning to beat, slowly. Perhaps he thought of the native drums he had heard so often

through the jungle, the first slow, solemn beats that start. Perhaps he thought of the storms of last winter —the beginning.

The screech of a flight of gulls overhead put Andy back at work with the piling. Down into the swaying surface of the water he would force the buoyant wood of the pile. Maybe four or five tries were necessary before its spiked end bit the sand in earnest. Andrew ground that end in by twisting the pile top in his hands. At first he had used rocks to weight down the lower end while he started it in with the sledge. But now, he was stronger, Andrew could do it with his hands and save time.

Then he would pull up the bobbing string of logs that served as a working stage. From that he drove in the pile with the sledge. He had to make a short quick swing because the waves sweeping in under him changed his aim continually. Oh, it was disheartening to miss! The sledge drove out of his hands and cracked against the logs by his ankles. Each time it happened this way Andrew would say to himself, "Lucky I didn't break an ankle!"

But the breakwater was growing. It was beyond the surf line on each side of the ship now. True, it was not as solid and well placed as he could have made it if he had a pile driver and a gang of men to do the work.

Nevertheless, as the sun sank, and Andy felt the freezing chill of wet clothes, he knew he was all but ready for the storm. This day would be the last on

the breakwater, and immediately he would step the masts and rig them in place. He could work that night on deck if he brought up the big cabin lantern from where it hung by the barometer.

Andy's heart quickened.

Oh, that barometer! Its needle had been so steady during these October days he had begun to mistrust the price he paid for it. Perhaps it had been worn out by the violent fluctuations of last winter. Perhaps it was no good anyway. Old Tarbox was the kind of a man who would sell a fellow anything, with his great long arms that never unbent and hung like perpetual coils of snarled rope by his side.

When the sun sank, Andrew hardly noticed. For the first time there was no marked sunset. The scroll of cloud at the horizon rose and obscured the sun. He did not notice night fall—he simply noticed that he was missing his aim with more than usual frequency. Regretfully, Andrew swung his sledge up on the deck and went around to the rope ladder. It was over.

The breakwater was in place, and on his neck Andrew felt the cold damp sting of wind.

That night, under a sky that was without stars and as black as velvet, Andrew worked with the stays and running gear, so that by morning he could step the mast.

As he worked Andrew felt that he was only half attentive to the actual business in hand. He was listening for Francelle. Or he had risen to glance at the weather and see if any change had come. Several times he went below to see the barometer. He tapped the

glass face, and the needle flickered. Rising or falling, Andrew could not tell. He would go on deck again.

"Come, come," he kept telling himself while his teeth chattered, "you can't go on this way. The storm is making up. You don't need an expensive barometer to tell you that. Listen to the waves."

Perhaps the waves were a bit louder. Or perhaps it was only because he was alone that their sound was more continuous in his ears. Every now and then Andrew glanced over the side. No, the tide was coming in peacefully, the waves lapping further and further up the beach. There was nothing alarming. He would have time. Andrew went on about his work, now far out on the tip of the bowsprit with his lantern bent onto a stay, now at the rail.

Suddenly he heard Francelle's voice.

Oh, how glad he was to hear it!

"Andrew!"

Andrew called back, "Francelle!"

Andrew let his voice carry. It was so fine to feel his voice in his throat again, to hear it carry.

Francelle called again. This time Andy thought her voice sounded hurried, and frightened. He quickly went to the rail.

"Put over the ladder," she called.

In a minute Andrew had it down. Of course, what a fool he had been, to pull up the ladder. He had done it without thinking, as though he were in a place where he needed to be protected by shutting doors at night and locking windows!

Once on deck, Andrew kissed her, and her face was fresh and cool. She stayed warm and tight in his arms and Andrew ached to say how he loved her, but something held him back. As though he were about to tell a lie, and for some reason was afraid.

"You must come below, Francelle," Andrew murmured to her. "You are as cold as ice, and you must be hungry."

But she stayed in Andrew's arms. "Did you think I was coming back?"

Andrew nodded and she suddenly swung up alongside him and bit his ear sharply, and laughed. "I must tell you where I've been . . ." She broke off. "Let's go below."

Andrew had done nearly as much as he could for one night and Francelle's return, curiously had acted on his empty stomach and made him all of a sudden dizzy and faint. So together they went down the companion stair.

Andrew threw some chips on the fire and soon had the drum stove red hot and the air humming in their ears with its warmth.

The stew which had stood for so long in the pot had run together and had that blend a stew should have. Andrew felt better as it warmed in his stomach. Ever since Francelle had left, his stomach had felt nervous, contracted, without appetite. Now, he would relax, it seemed.

Andrew slid the coffee pot over on the stove top and decided to ask Francelle where she had been. He

remembered now the note of fright in her voice, as though she had been chased by something up to the ship.

"You haven't been all the way to town and back," he asked.

A strange look came into Francelle's eyes and they grew cold and distant suddenly. Francelle's eyes could change like the sea, when a cloud passes over the sun.

Andrew felt she would tell him something unusual. But where she could have been he had no idea.

"Have you ever heard of the old try works that was started once up at the foot of the ravine, near where the brook runs out?"

Andrew shook his head. Then he remembered. "Yes, one day I saw some bricks there, but I did not know there had ever been a try works."

Andrew waited for her to go on with her story. It was probably some yarn she had heard among the fishermen, he thought.

"Publicoaver told me about it," she began. "That's where I heard it first. A long time ago when they used to send out whalers from Gifford, some of the men thought the Cove would be a good place to work over the whale oil. So they came out here to start a small colony." She paused a moment. "Maybe all this isn't true," she said defensively. "You must remember Publicoaver thinks there's some kind of a devil that lives in the sea and uses this place as his lair."

Andrew laughed. "He believes fairy tales still. But go on. There may be something about the Cove

in the story that will show me a new card I have not guessed."

Francelle pursed her lips, as though in doubt as to where she would start. Suddenly she began to talk.

"They went on with the foundations for several months. They had to bring all the bricks from Gifford, and it was slow work. Then as soon as they had the walls started, they would cave in." Francelle looked up at Andrew. "Have you ever noticed the whitish color of the water in the brook?" Yes, come to think of it, he had. "The brook probably goes over limestone somewhere underground," Andy answered.

"I looked at it to-night. I never had before, because you had warned me the ground was treacherous there. But I wanted to see. I have been thinking about this story at night lately. This morning I went swimming and I suddenly thought of it and had to come running out as though I had a cramp."

"Well?" Andrew asked, waiting for her to go on.

"They kept on with the brick work and continued to have cave-ins. Some of the men began to leave. Finally, those who remained began to think a visit to an old hermit who worked a farm up over the crest of the hill would be a good thing. He had a great many herbs and people called him a doctor. The old man told them that their wall would not stand until they boxed up in the brick-work the loveliest woman among them. The old hermit was a woman-hater. At first they did not think seriously of the idea, of course. Then one night there was a storm, and they were fright-

ened and decided to do it. The woman they chose had a baby, and as they were putting the last bricks in place she begged that they leave an opening so she could nurse her child . . . And so . . ."

Andrew knew Francelle had finished. For a moment he could not speak. He glanced up as her voice fell at the end and noticed the expression of horror on her face. Her eyes were wide as though she really believed it.

"That crazy Publicoaver!" Andy cried, as boisterously as he could. "And that's why the water runs whitish yet, I suppose. Because of the mother boxed in the brick!"

"They never finished the try works," went on Francelle, "They gave up after the first month of winter."

"Why do you let all these things stick in your mind, Francelle? Lord knows it's silent and lonely enough out here without thinking of all these things in addition."

The coffee pot was steaming. Andrew lifted it down from the drum stove and poured out two cups of black coffee. What he wanted now was peace, rest—his body cried out for it.

As Andrew poured, once he fancied he heard a soft swishing across the deck.

He must have started, for he spilled a little coffee. Andrew told himself he was hearing things after Francelle's ghost story, and sipped at his cup. The coffee was savory and it felt good in Andrew's belly.

"I was thinking of that story to-day," Francelle was saying. "It isn't as though I believed it were true,

exactly, but I thought I'd sleep better if for once I just went and *saw* the place."

Andrew heard the swish across the decks above once more.

"Did you hear that?" he asked. In a hurry he rose and left the galley.

Francelle followed him aft to the cabin hatch, and together they jerked it open. With the lantern left in the galley, it was black enough in the cabin. Outside, though, the sky was blacker yet.

Andrew felt rain drops on his face . . . So. He was relieved. That was it. Rain.

Neither made a move to close the hatch. Perhaps that sudden black sky, and the low sound of the waves awed them, after talking about the story of the Cove.

Andrew found himself tiptoeing back to the galley for the lantern, and tried to laugh. He stamped on the floor boards once or twice.

On his way back, Andrew passed the barometer. He tapped the glass and held the lantern up by it. The needle swung definitely a short distance to the left. He set the marker hard in the new place and closed the hatch.

Shortly after, it began to rain hard. Big drops were falling.

Andrew listened for wind, but he could hear none.

"Oh, well, I might as well get some sleep now," Andrew thought. "The sea will never rise with a heavy rain flattening it out, and no wind."

In his bunk, Andrew slept very little indeed. All night the rain fell heavily on the deck above his head.

XXI

WELL, you see, that night Andrew slept alone.

It was plain that with Francelle he would have to begin all over again. Andrew had frightened her away by too deep an alliance to his schooner.

That was it, Andrew was sure. "So," Andrew felt, "let matters take their course—it will not be long now before we are away and afloat. Then matters will change. Ah, yes, it will be very different then. She will gradually tell me all that troubles her. In the meantime, isn't it for the best that Francelle is just my cook, and I no longer her lover?"

November at the Cove, and rain falling. Yes, the rain fell all day long after that night when Francelle returned. But no wind, and every hour Andrew would visit the barometer. Still the shiny silver dial showed a fractional decline each time he tapped the glass. . . . It was November now, October was gone. The cold unceasing rain continued to fall. For nearly a week it did not stop, with the faint breeze blowing intermittently from the Southeast.

Andrew worked on deck with his old energy. Oh, the things to do! In those short days the masts had to be stepped and the sails bent on. With everything wet, the rope was snarled and hard to manage. Andy's fingers were blue and numb. At night in the warm

cabin, they were swollen and clumsy. Still, by the fifth day he had the foremast in place and the mainmast ready to step.

Francelle caught spirit from the sight of that first mast. She began to really *see* how wonderful a thing it actually was, to have this schooner. Somehow masts to a ship were as legs to a human. What human who would not seem thick and clumsy without his legs? Oh, the look of those tapering masts! Andrew could not keep from staring at them and interrupting his work. They gave his whole plan, that he had clung to for so long, the appearance of life. The ship looked as though she would sail. That was it.

When Andrew walked the deck it no longer seemed solid and ungiving under his feet. Now he could fancy the *Polaris* heeled over before a favoring wind, with her wake bubbling up astern, and the stars flying past her sails.

Now and then he would pause in his work at the rigging to reach out with his sledge from the deck and tap a pile, just to prove to himself how he was going to hit them when the Easterly winter storm came in. It was like getting a range, and Andrew tried to accustom his arm to the swing.

Francelle caught on to this new spirit of life aboard the ship. She would come over and stand by Andrew when he came below to tap the barometer. And she had taken it into her mind to make the cabin livable. The store of blankets and mattresses Andy had brought out she had fitted into the bunks where a crew might finally

be. The crew Andrew would pick up in the sailor-towns of the world, in Odessa and Shanghai, Marseilles and New York.

She picked up the carpet Andrew had stretched over the sand and fitted pieces here and there. She made several shades for the cabin lanterns they had, and Andrew even found her carpentering one afternoon. Making shelves, she told Andrew, for the china. And then she cut little curtains for the cabin port-holes from the material of an old dress.

Francelle's new interest in the ship made it more difficult to keep to the course of indifference Andrew's practical mind had recommended. When she ran her hand along the shelf at the side of the cabin, Andrew was restless all right! Why should it have stirred him up so? He would tell himself, "Look here now, don't go playing the fool with this girl. She'll still be here when the *Polaris* is afloat, and you'll have all the time in the world to monkey with her then. Just go on deck and take a look at the Eastern horizon, if you want to be cooled off. That's enough to remind you."

And so he did. Andrew and Francelle kept on sleeping in different bunks until the night the storm struck. . . .

When Andrew went on deck one morning he noticed the water seemed riled as it broke on the sand. He climbed down to the beach, and all along the shore of the Cove he saw a thin margin of kelp and seaweed, a dark line from a distance. Ah, the death winter brings

was not far! There was a great storm out there in the ocean, and these bits of eel grass and kelp had been ripped from the ocean bed far out.

Andrew knew his Cove by now. He noticed a low groundswell had replaced the shorter waves of the preceding days. The rain was finer, more like mist. It was low tide, and hard indeed to guess the size of the groundswell. It was a broad, slick wave that did not crest, he could see that. As far as he could see out toward the open sea, there was just that rolling look on the water. It was like a sheet spread out flat, and slowly undulated.

It did not take Andy long to get back on board the ship. In a moment he was up the rope ladder and down in the cabin swallowing a hasty breakfast. That mainsail had to be bent on to-day, and if there was a wind to belly out the canvas, the job would give him a stiff fight.

Once on deck again, Andrew thought he heard the clang of the bell buoy. He dropped everything to listen for it, and wet his finger and held it up in the breeze to catch any shift in direction by the cold moving around his finger. Perhaps, perhaps. He could not decide. In a fever of hurry, Andrew rushed at the mainsail, to draw the lacings through the eyelets, and fasten on the rings. The mast was stepped and the stays tied temporarily in place.

"My heavens!" Andrew would suddenly think. "In a second that wind can rip around to East, and Northeast, and a gale be here in an hour's time."

By noon he heard the clang of the bell distinctly!

Andrew's heart began to beat up in his throat, and he could not eat.

He worked at the canvas, swearing and cursing with its stiff bulk. And all the time he heard the slow swinging iron hammers knock against the rigid bronze bell. A low echoing clang over the water, faint of course, but slow, regular and clear.

The tide was in, and he saw the surf was higher. The waves seemed to fall a perceptible distance when they broke, they seemed to hesitate for a moment, gathering height. Oh, yes, it was coming! The storms of winter were on their way, rushing through that thick gray sky with force they gathered over miles of unresisting open water. That gale, that ocean, slow to be troubled, was stirred to its depths, moving on toward Andrew. All that distance it was coming, with nothing to stop it, nothing to deflect it, till it struck this shore.

The barometer was sinking fast. Francelle came running on deck almost every hour to cry out the reading. As a last thought Andrew had asked her to get ready two hand pumps. Perhaps the schooner might be strained in places he had not been able to reach. Andrew wanted to take no chances, and, of course, it had been only her upper side that he had been able to reach with his caulking mallet and oakum. Still, from the inside of her skin, he was sure there were not many places.

You could not be too careful! Not with that lowering sky and a barometer dipping steadily. Francelle

was rigging one pump on each side, from the bilge up to a port-hole. If worst came to worst, she would be there to work them, and the ship could somehow be kept afloat until the storm blew down enough for them to make the shelter of Gifford Harbor.

Wouldn't Publicoaver be surprised to see these two masts among that harbor's shipping! Perhaps he would be down on the dock when they came in, and see the splash of the anchor, and hear the rattle of chain as it ran out! He would be mad enough to see how simply Andrew and Francelle had taken up his revenge on the Cove, how neatly it had been lifted out of his clumsy hands. Francelle would be aboard too. That would be nice. Publicoaver would see her standing with him on the deck as they rounded up to anchor.

Well, that was a long time off. Perhaps it would be only a week, or a few days, still those days would seem as years, so much would be crowded in them. So many things would have to be done, and done like a flash to save the ship.

When the hull finally teetered free, and the waves had eaten out the sand under her so that she floated, and they lifted her clear! Then there would be swift work. To make sail and get clear of the bar before she drove on again. . . .

That afternoon, at the turn of the tide, the gulls were in the air close down to the water, screaming, it seemed to Andrew, for an unusually long time. Night came on swiftly, and bit by bit during the day the wind had risen. Oh, you could feel it on your face now,

straight out of the East, and full of fine mist that went through warm flannel shirts as fast as Andrew changed them. He did not stop his work with the mainsail long enough to change more than three times in that afternoon. But he knew his muscles must not get stiff.

If Andy felt an ache in his arm, he would hurry to the sledge and swing it on a pile top several times to warm up.

Andrew found himself working in darkness, with all but the halyards and sheet rope rove in place. Ah, he would be in time! All he asked was an hour more, then let the storm break! The stiffer the better!

Francelle had finished with the pumps. Now Andrew showed her how to tie up the jibs and foresail so that they would come undone with one jerk of a cord. She completed this work. Every movable object on the deck had been taken below, or lashed down. Francelle had tacked strips of batten over the forward hatches. The stovepipe from the galley was down and the hole plugged tight.

Up the mainmast Andrew worked, swinging back and forth in the wind from the narrow boatswain's chair. He had lashed an anchor light to the mast, so he had light enough to work by, reeving the halyards. Below, the ship, canted on her side, seemed small indeed, and the clouds close over his head.

Finally he slid down.

Andrew had finished, and there was time.

He went below with Francelle, and locked the hatch

after him. Into his bunk he rolled, dead tired, for the last sleep he would have.

As he drifted off into dreams he heard the sound of the wind about the two masts and the new rigging. When he listened, Andy heard the continuous sound of the waves down the shore.

By morning, he thought, Shark Cove will be a new place. Seen close to, a storm would change the familiar Cove so that he would hardly recognize it. Still, suppose the storm be not strong enough?

He remembered the storms of the preceding winter. He remembered again the twisted forms of the pines at the head of the cliff, back from the edge. He had seen their few wild branches against the sky often when he had been cutting timber up there, caught madly by the wind. Oh, if the wind had force enough to split the bark down from those trees, and bend their gnarled tough trunks backward toward the earth, it would work for him!

Andrew fell into a restless sleep, and left a lantern burning by the side of his bunk, near his hand.

XXII

THE schooner stirred with faint life!

Andrew fell out of bed in a tangle with the blankets and stood on the floor. He rubbed his eyes and waited again for the sound that had wakened him sharply.

He heard it. A wave broke with a thud outside. Andrew heard the swish of upward flying spray and its spattering fall over the deck. Ah! And then just at that moment, a great creak and a groan followed down the keel of the ship. The body of the broken wave swarming up under her stern!

Andrew knew the *Polaris* would come off when he heard that groan down her spine. There was no telling how high the waves were that washed up under her like that. Maybe the breakwater had gone out! But no, he glanced through the dripping port-hole, and it was black outside. It was still night. There would not have been time enough for that.

He lifted the lantern up to see the alarm clock that hung near the barometer. It was just after four.

Andrew went over to Francelle's bunk, trembling with excitement. He went toward her as a moth to flame.

Why? The excitement in him was too great to be held in. . . . He put the lantern low, shielding it

with his hand so the light would not flare across her eyes. He looked at her as she lay sleeping.

Oh, the wonder of standing there by Francelle, sleeping, breathing, while all his ship's life was in the air about him. Andrew became dizzy and leaned back against the bunk rail . . . Only four, he reasoned, and he listened to the rush of waves overhead. In so short a time this furious storm had swept in out of the ocean. . . . In a few more hours—would there be a place for living creatures here at Shark Cove? Andrew suddenly wondered if there would be sand in the air. Surely the wind would whirl up the sand in great eddies. That would be hard. But his ship . . . she was a *living* thing under him! He felt her timbers move slightly under his foot—or was it only fancy? Now the wave was receding, drawing back into the ocean, sucking back the sand from around the imbedded hull.

"I ought to go on deck," Andrew thought.

He glanced down at Francelle. The blankets had fallen from her shoulder, and it was bare. Her face was slightly flushed as she slept, with her underneath arm curled up backwards, palm down over her head. Andy was rooted to the floor where he stood. His heart was beating so, he would be useless on deck. Andrew must persuade himself to stay below till this trembling left his legs.

Of what use would trembling legs be against a swirl of a wave flung up over the deck? He would be folded up in a second like a camp chair and drawn overside,

boiled in the water and knocked against the bulkhead. He must stay here and quiet this crazy jumping of his heart.

Andrew looked again straight down at Francelle, sleeping there so peacefully, so far away . . . He thought of her splashing out of the sunlit surf but a few days ago. Oh, Francelle, so like a child! So wild, so hard to predict. . . . Under Andy's steady gaze, she moved slightly under the heavy blankets.

Andrew saw her body stir and his hand reached out to touch her. To touch her hair maybe. Just a touch —she would not wake up. His hand lowered, and he felt tender, overcome by what was in him. He stroked her hair ever so lightly, again and again. His hand deepened in her short black hair, that was as fine as the ravelings of a sheer silk stocking. So smooth. Andrew felt the rounded line of her skull.

"Oh, Francelle," thought Andrew, "your hard little head—it's so much your own little head that holds your private little thoughts no man could know about."

Andrew bent to kiss that head. He could tell it that way, now when it was sleeping, and she so far apart, and yet so near, what he could not tell it when awake. He could breathe into it all the tenderness that unnerved him, and made the palms of his hands chill.

She turned further on her side, and Andrew saw in the lantern light the fine line of her shoulder blade where her arm had been before. "Francelle, all of you so beautiful! Each part of you your own! Everything speaks of you, your hands, and all that goes on

in your mysterious eyes. Yes, even those eyes, closed, speak of you. The high fine arch of your brows, as free as the wing of a bird. How can a man stand long by you, asleep?"

Andrew's mood was sharply broken. Great heavens . . . ! A wave. Could it be a wave that fell on the deck with such a thunder? Yes, perhaps, with all this cabin below it, battened tight like a drum. It could have been a wave. Now Andrew heard the wash of it, running down the deck in huge streams. The steady pour of it overside in the intervening calm . . .

He clenched his hands, as though he were pretending something, playing some game, and walked to the wall where his sea-going cap hung. He pulled it down tight over his ears. The wind should not have it. He drew on the heavy sea-boots slowly, stopping to wonder as each wave swept up under the ship, and her working ribs creaked under the strain. . . . Was he just playing a game? Was he just a kid again, pretending to have his own ship on a front porch near the sound of the ocean at night, within the smell of its salt?

Of course not! A man should not have such distractions in his head at such a time! To be trembling this way, unsure of himself! Contemptuously, Andrew drew a heavy sweater over his head. He looked over at Francelle's bunk, and raised the lantern to see. . . . So—she was still sleeping.

"Here!" Andrew cried sharply to himself. "You fool! With all that storm outside you stand below like an idiot farmer, like some dull country boy with gaping

mouth who feeds the pigs and one day will eat their carcass! Come, you are a sailor."

Andrew must have moved around on the floor as he cursed himself. The noise wakened Francelle.

He glanced over to find her stretching, with her mouth in a great yawn.

Just as he looked, a wave struck the deck.

Francelle gave a quick cry, and sat upright—startled and frightened. Andrew did not speak, but kept in the shadow of his lantern, still, and afraid to move. Francelle was so like a startled animal—a rabbit pausing in his jumps to listen.

In the lantern light Andrew could see the firm, slim sweep of her back, up from the bunk, and her erect head. She spread out her hands to the bunk sides, as though to slip to the floor. Then she waited.

Another wave broke across the deck and Andrew heard its foaming retreat.

Perhaps he only lost his balance, and fell forward from dizziness; or perhaps the ship actually did lurch. For an instant, Andrew thought the ship was free. He was sure of it!

A kind of ecstasy seized him and he almost fell, but with a stumble recovered his feet.

"Oh, Francelle!" he cried, voice broken in half, and choked by a childlike sob.

"Francelle!" He ran stumbling across the cabin toward her.

Andrew caught sight of her bare feet as she swung out over the edge of the bunk.

He fell, crying wildly, down by her feet, and lifted his head as he felt how warm she was. He couldn't speak. He just looked up at her, and she looked down at him.

Perhaps she didn't mean to, and it was just instinctive. . . . Anyway, she caught Andrew's face between her cool hands and drew his head in to her. She kissed his head and he felt her hand against his forehead.

"Andrew, Andrew," she kept murmuring softly. "Andrew . . ."

At last the cry that was in him burst out.

He gripped her arms tight.

"Oh, Francelle, the ship is coming alive!"

She still looked at him, as though she did not understand.

Andrew *had* to make her know. Overhead there was the pound of another wave. The grip he had on her arm tightened. Andrew bent and kissed it as hard as he could. What an arm! So firm, and always so smooth under your fingers. God! He would go mad. He couldn't hold in any longer all that was in him . . . The thunder of the waves overhead and the answering creak and lift of the hull and the waves bodied up underneath the hull.

Andrew groped behind him with one free hand to find his cap that had fallen off. He caught it in his fingers and crammed it on his head. He broke away and stood up. His ship coming alive under him at last.

Francelle looked up at him without speaking, and slowly Andrew's mind seemed to cool and be able to go ahead. It took the first steps of thinking as an invalid who has been long in bed first walks again. Slowly, bewildered, hesitant.

With a last look at Francelle, he spoke to her gently. "Don't be afraid down here, Francelle. You'll be all right."

Then Andrew took the lantern in his hand and stumbled over the slanting floor to the companionway stair. As he came up under the hatch he had to stop and fumble with the catch to unfasten it so that it would slide back.

Up there, close to the deck, right under it, Andrew heard a wave fall with a great resounding boom. Right on top of him it seemed. Andrew put his hand up against the deck. He thought he felt the deck over his head sway and give under its load.

Suddenly the hatch cover came free. Andrew waited to measure out a few seconds, till the water should have had time to run clear to the lower side of the deck. He waited, trembling to act, so that there would be time to slam the hatch shut after him before the next comber struck.

With a jerk of his wrist, the hatch slid back. Andrew stumbled up on deck and slammed the hatch shut after him.

Then Andrew looked up and saw the ocean.

XXIII

OVERHEAD, the heavy gray sky Andrew had become accustomed to during the rain, a sky all but overcome with its heaviness, had been ripped to shreds. A wild wind, blowing low, close to the maddened water, drew the ragged clouds streaming through the air. Little strips of dark cloud, some of them pale and luminous, almost a light brown in the thick darkness of the air. They seemed lighted by the whitened, foaming water. All these clouds were so close down! The wind was right on top of him, the sea almost underneath him as it swept up the tilted deck.

Andrew hung on to a shroud to accustom his eyes to the blackness. His lantern blew out.

Great heaven! What a wind! Andrew would need just part of the mainsail peak up in this wind to heel her over. Maybe just that and the bare tip of the jib to pull her nose around, when she finally came afloat and he had to wear her off the bar. Well, the sails were all stopped up in place, halyards looped up free of the deck. Good fisherman sails, they were. Andrew remembered the night he bought them.

Andy tried to make out the beach line, to find where the surf was breaking. But he could not distinguish it through the spray. A whirl of the wind brought a cloud of sand biting into his face, and he ducked his

head—just in time to hold fast to the shrouds while a wave broke down over the deck, up around his knees, icy cold and bristling with foam.

As Andrew turned his head to look from one direction to another, the wind came at him, first as though to snatch his ears from his skull, and then to flatten them against his head.

When Andrew faced directly into the wind, the pressure of it stopped up his nostrils, and choked his breath back down his throat. For a moment he was stifled. Then he learned to bend his head forward, and peer up from under the visor of his cap.

As he grew used to the whir of the wind, the drum beats of the surf on the shore suddenly became clear. He caught their rhythm and listened for each beat. Andrew had never a thought for his sledge or the hammering he must do on the piles for nearly a half hour. It took him that long in this sudden chaos to get his wits together, to summon back his purpose and will.

It was huge, this night, black and fantastic. Like a dream about monsters, wild unchained monsters that had been released all at once. The broad backs of the shouldering waves, dark and looming, seemed to follow no method, to follow in no true succession against the breakwater. Yes, it was too early in the storm for them to have gathered a regular momentum; they would keep on growing. True, as Andrew watched a black crest swim up to the pile tops, going thwup—thwupp—thwuppp! all the way down the line, as each

top disappeared, he realized their size was increasing every moment. The waves were taking shape.

After the mass of water swirled up over the top of the breakwater, it seemed to sway back and forth a moment in consternation. Ah, that was working those piles loose, just as he planned! Then the wave broke, flew high in the air, with the spray whipped out ahead by the force of the gale. The wave fell with a trembling thud on the deck, and seemed to shake the ship all over, to wrench at her as she lay, solidly fixed in the sand. Then the water rushed down the tilted deck, foaming white, in a broad cascade over the hatches, past the stays, over the rail in a loud fall . . . Then he would hear the warning thwupp! of the next wave as it reached the tops of the piles, slowly towering, swaying—finally with an overbalance, collapsing with the report of a pistol shot.

It angered Andrew finally, this sight of the ocean in such full possession of all it touched. It was having matters all its own way. Every whip the wind gave his ears, every breath it choked in him, made it easier to act. Andrew began to see it all as a personal conflict, an out-and-out straight fight.

He pulled his cap down tight and sought out the place on deck by the mainmast where he had lashed his sledge. In between the deluges of water he worked the lashings loose, and had it firmly in his hands. When the water swirled up around his waist, it seemed actually to twist that sledge out of his hands! Twice he nearly lost it.

Andrew made his way aft and started to swing on the tops nearest the stern. The first few swings went wild and missed. Right away Andrew forgot the storm and put all his attention and strength right on that object! The top of the pile. And finally he began to hit squarely.

Gradually, as he timed the swing of his blows to the waves, he let out his strength and gave a full body swing to each blow. The roar along the beach faded in his ears and he heard just the approaching sound of a wave as it topped the piles, and then the smart "crack" of the sledge as it struck down. Though the wind tried to push him this way and that, Andrew aimed each blow. It was Andrew's answer to all this bellowing wind and crazy water.

Well, the sound of that sledge on the wet pile top reassured him. He felt he was getting ahead, with so many things overcome, and holding his own against the storm. Each crack of Andrew's sledge was a step ahead. It was like interest written down in red ink in a savings account book, poker chips taken from the ocean.

Finally a dusky light appeared over the horizon, a dim gray light in which objects were more clear, and Andrew knew day had come. It put strength in him. Although the seas did not moderate a fraction, or the wind lose its power, he could see the height of the waves. He could see the bottom of each trough—it was not just a black gulf spreading away. He was coming ahead. He felt strong and in great spirit. Surely

it would be easy to keep swinging this sledge all day! How could he ever have thought a light thing such as a sledge could tire him out?

As the day wore on, the waves towered up higher. They were green now, rather than gray blue of morning, and seemed transparent in the greater light. They fell more regularly, sometimes in a series of three big, two small, then one big and two small. The high waves now actually made a lee on the deck as they swam up to crest! When they were right on top of the deck, they cut off the air. Of course, that would happen. But even after he realized why, it still was a shock that anything was huge enough to block off the force of that gale.

As a wave formed up out of the tumbling mass of water its predecessor left, suddenly the push of the gale was gone. Like a flash it left. Then a silence about his ears, broken by the first rush of breaking on the crest. A little draught of chill air, as though an iceberg were looming close, then the crash and high flying foam of its fall. Over the broken wave the wind struck mercilessly, drove flat the seething mass, blew great balls of spume from the surface of the water.

Then in the next pause, while the gale resumed and the water emptied with rushing madness from the deck, Andrew braced his legs. "Crack!" went the sledge. Andrew hit the pile until the top disappeared; usually he had three swings at it, then hung to the rail while the water swept up over the deck again.

Andrew lost track of time. It was probably about

the middle of the morning, though he thought it was afternoon, when Francelle opened the hatch of the cabin for a moment to call out a message. She had timed her chance well, and during the lull she called out what she had to say three times, desperately.

But Andy could not hear. She could not hear him, even though she was only six feet away. The wind wiped the words straight off her lips, all Andrew could see was that she was moving them like a dumb person.

She ducked just in time. A rush of water poured down the half closed hatch. Lord! Andy thought, perhaps that gave her a scare all right!

Her face was pale and excited when she tried to give Andrew the message, and for several hours after, he worked on with a small worry eating its way slowly into his happy concentration on his work. Messages you don't get are the most annoying things in the world, they can mean so many things, Andrew reflected.

What was the trouble? he wondered, in the moments between swings at the breakwater. Was the schooner leaking, had these waves worked her open, wrenched apart a seam?

For with each wave now, the ship was stirring slightly. Andrew could feel her buoy up regularly as each wave swarmed up about the hull. Then she would resist, and the dead weight of the water on her decks would punch her down. It must be a terrific strain, Andrew thought. Still, a wooden ship is built for strain, and Andy knew the *Polaris* was tough in every

stut and knee brace. He tried to forget his concern. Perhaps Francelle was frightened. It must be terrifying below to hear these waves boom down. To feel the whole hull quiver and shake.

Andrew decided he would go below as soon as he could. He would be able to reassure Francelle with a few words.

But the gale was not slackening. Andrew was only just keeping ahead of the ocean. Hard enough work for a fellow who didn't think much of work? It certainly was, and it would be hard to hire any one to work the way Andrew worked. But he had his own ship to think about, that was coming to him. He was pulling up his roots out of the muck of an office by getting this ship out of the tangle of land. He was winning a great freedom, for sailing and carousal and laziness as the whim might move him. Who would not strain his back for that?

Andrew kept on pounding though he wanted to go below. The wind did not relax its unending howl about the mast. Now and then, as time wore on the note would rise in pitch for a moment, and sing shrill through the tight rigging. A trace of warning that there was more in the offing, that the ocean was not fully unleashed against this shore yet.

Andrew felt himself saving his strength for the shots he took with the sledge after each time the wind suddenly rose to that high humming. Gradually he realized that this battle was going to be a long one. It is

easy to say three days. Andrew began to sense that it might not be so easy to come through them, day and night at this job, and come through alive.

For the first time since he had started to test his power against the storm, Andrew was awed.

"Food!" he shouted to himself above the roar of the wind. "That is what I need! And Francelle—she'll be upset—no news of how things are going—"

Andrew made the sledge fast to the rail with a rope's end, where the sea could not get it, and opened the fastenings of the hatch. Biding his time, when a lull came, he slid the cover back in a flash, and slammed it shut after him.

As he walked down the companion ladder face foremost, stooping at first, he gradually caught sight of Francelle. She was lying face down in one of the bunks.

Andrew yelled to her.

"Francelle, we're going to win!"

She rose up to a sitting position, rigid.

Her face was white.

"My God! My God!" Andrew moaned as he stumbled toward her, "what in heaven's name has happened?"

"We'll be drowned," cried Francelle, between gasps. "You're done for. The schooner's as good as sunk!" she cried.

Andrew ran the rest of the way down the cabin with no uncertain step. He caught Francelle.

Suddenly she became quiet, and sank back against his arm.

Have you ever kissed a person in white-hot anger?

That was the way Andrew kissed Francelle, because words failed him and he could not speak. He was trembling.

Suddenly, with the shock of her cool moist lips unresisting against his hot ones that burned with salt, Andrew became sane again. He knocked off his cap in exasperation.

"In God's name, Francelle, what has happened—tell me!"

XXIV

ANDREW first went to the pumps. They were long galvanized iron tubes of the common sort, with a circular leather plunger worked by a long handle up and down. Two troughs led the stream pumped to the level of the cabin ports, out through the circular opening to the deck. The schooner could leak badly and still be kept afloat if a person kept steadily at these pumps. Andy had rigged little leather flaps where the trough passed on into the open so that the water could run out but on no account flow back into the cabin.

The pumps had to be worked by standing on top of the table in the main cabin, because the handles rose so high. But then there was not so much bending this way.

Andrew looked over the pumps carefully and tried each one. In his anger at Francelle's not telling him right out what the trouble was, he ignored her. She lay back now, quietly in her bunk, watching him like a child, with wide, round eyes. Andy let her alone, and did not speak further; if it was trouble with the pumps, or a leak, he could find out for himself. He gave each pump a few rapid strokes, and drew water for only a short time, then began to suck up suds, which was a sign that there was almost no water in the bilge. The ship was not leaking to speak of.

He climbed down from the table and examined the inner skin of the hull, from the galley forward to the hollow space in the stern under the counter. He couldn't find any sprung seams, although the strain was tremendous, more than he had realized, every time a wave struck up over the breakwater and fell around the hull. Timbers creaked and groaned against each other in the darkness, but beyond a slight trickle here and there that was of no importance, the hull was holding together in fine style.

He went up into the galley, opened up some ship's biscuit, and a tin of corned beef, and returned to the cabin. He slouched down to eat them on the bunk opposite Francelle's. Now and then he glanced over to where she lay.

Could you be tender of a woman's fears and moods when there was great business on hand, Andrew wondered. Perhaps not. And yet, as time went on, that unending rumble and thunder of water pounding on the deck above, began to make Andrew a little nervous. Perhaps the very fact that Francelle herself had sealed up all the cracks around the hatches and plugged the opening for the stovepipe, increased the shut-in feeling. Andrew could understand that now. In a way, he began to have the sensation of being bottled up tight.

With a little food and a drink of water to down his thirst, Andrew felt better. Perhaps a little sleep, now, he thought, then to go on deck for the night. As he thought of the night, Andrew remembered the occasional high shrieks of wind that had come. He

scratched his head, and tried to stop thinking about it. He glanced over at Francelle. She was still lying there quietly.

"Well, well," Andrew thought, "she has had a bad scare this time. Is it really fair for me to treat her roughly like this? Surely I should go over and give her a pat, and tell her it is all right." With these great drum beats of falling waves on the deck, there would be no sleep below.

Andrew sighed, and took off his cap. He must talk to Francelle, prepare Francelle for the coming night.

He went across the cabin, and glanced at the barometer.

Andrew's heart gave a swift bump in his chest as he saw where the needle pointed now. Since he had left the cabin when the storm broke, the needle had traveled further in its descent than it had during all the hours of the storm's approach. He was truly startled, for a thing like a barometer is so unemotional in all the welter of things that scream and foam and destroy at such speed in a storm. There it was, with its silver polished dial, and fine markings, and the hair-like hand. There it was, an exact and sensitive instrument—measuring off that tremendous arc of descent.

If Andrew had any thought that the storm would not increase, it left him on the spot. More was coming, an unknown more, that would change utterly even this wild scene, transformed as it was from the way he had known the Cove during the weeks of his labor, during the winter before. The dial was not lying, it could tell

only the truth. And from what it told, Andrew was far less assured as he crossed the cabin to Francelle's bunk. He walked slowly and thoughtfully over that short distance, and sat down on the edge of her bunk.

More to himself than to Francelle he muttered, "We're in for it."

Andrew felt her body stir, and he turned to look at her face.

It was the first time Andrew had looked at her when he had been cool, and not shaken inside by the continuing surges of battle, which kept on even after he had left off driving down the piles.

Andrew calmly looked into her eyes which fluttered open under his gaze.

"We're in for it?" she repeated, staring at Andrew like a child. Frightened, but somehow deeply trusting him. That upset Andrew unspeakably.

There was nothing he could do . . . he talked to her about how they would fix up the cabin, about what a joke it was they had played when he stretched the red carpet up over the dunes to the place where necessities were satisfied, so that it would be a comfortable walk. Nothing he said really amused her, diverted her. Her laugh, which came with Andrew's laugh, was faint, complaisant, and she resumed her stare, losing her eyes in Andrew's.

Fear had exhausted her, left her without will. Her ability to speak seemed curiously paralyzed for the time, in the silence suspense long sustained will often produce.

And still, she was every inch Francelle. Her body

was beautiful, her arms, and her neck. The thing that was so rare about her was clear. The sense that she had her own little soul, that she had her own little life going on privately, where no man would ever see it.

Andrew's heart suddenly became heavy in him. He dropped his head in his hands to think. What could he do? Whatever would happen to them . . . Francelle's utter relaxation and trust made him feel more completely alone. Would he be overcome by the terrible loneliness of his battle now?

Oh, no, it could not be that way! The ship was like a backbone in Andrew, her keel his spine. As long as that ship lasted, Andrew would last—he knew that. He looked again at Francelle.

If she had only not been so beautiful, so appealing, lying there, it would have been easier for Andrew to shake off this clinging trust. He might have been brutal. Just ground his heel and gone on deck. The storm would absorb all thought but the life of his groaning ship, slowly working herself free.

Andrew asked Francelle if she were hungry, and she nodded.

He brought over to her bunk some of the food he had been eating, and found himself breaking up the tough biscuits into small pieces for her, as though he were feeding a small child. Ho! Obviously she could eat.

Andrew suddenly found himself wondering. Fran-

celle was so beautiful, her hands with that habit of lingering touch on all they came against.

Why battle with that wild mass of ocean above?

Why not just stay here in this warm cabin with Francelle, and forget everything else—come what might? Francelle had that thing about her Andrew always thought of as rare in a woman. Her brows were like a bird's wings.

Andrew wondered if she no longer understood what was at stake. If the storm had dulled her recollection . . .

"Andrew," she suddenly said, "I want to ask you something."

"What is it, Francelle?"

"Do you mind if I come on deck for a while? I want to see the storm."

For a moment, Andrew was nonplussed. Then he suddenly awoke with a start, as if from a dream.

"Why yes, Francelle, I don't see why it isn't perfectly possible. I could lash you to the rail somehow. You'd be very safe, and if you wrapped up warmly, I think it would be all right."

Perhaps it would be better for her up there, where she could see how things were going.

And so, in about half an hour, they both went on deck. . . .

As the barometer had foretold, the crest of the storm was yet to come. The rain was falling in heavier drops, it seemed to Andrew, and the seas were dark and much

higher. Each crest leaned over, more frayed out by the wind than any he had seen before, and thundered foaming up over the breakwater.

Andrew noticed with a great thrill that the breakwater was doing its work! A wide gash had eaten into the line of the bar, and the waves were breaking further forward. Andrew's plan was working. It had never faltered.

And with the jerks of each comber, the ship wrenched more and more. Her deck was really unsteady now, the movement had become so pronounced.

With the waves breaking forward, Andrew found it easy to make a place for Francelle aft, by the wheel box. He stuffed blankets around her, and roped her slight body in tight, so that a great crest that combed the deck stem to stern would never sweep her off. She smiled up at him as he made the ropes fast, and carried each turn under her arm pits. Oh, Andrew carried with him that smile as he went to work!

In all, Andrew had been below for several hours, and the breakwater needed attention. Francelle would be safer here than below if anything should go wrong. She was warm and comfortable; even if the wind whipped around her, it could only strike her face. And the drenching spray and rain would be kept off by the slickers he slipped under the rope lashings, over her blankets.

As Andrew turned to look for his sledge, he thought —"Soon the last jerks of the freeing ship will come—maybe even as early as this very night—and I'll be start-

ing the sails up. They'll crack like pistols when the wind gets into them."

There was all that to anticipate, this excitement of the final leaving shore; and feeling for the first time the rise and fall of the deck under his feet, the tug of the wheel spokes in his hand as Andrew guided the plunging bow off the bar, toward clear water. . . . Oh, all that remained on hand to do was to hammer at the breakwater again.

Andrew unlashed the sledge, and it felt light in his hands.

He was full of hope again, and his blows fell true on the pile tops.

XXV

NIGHT fell, and the sea was tigered with broad stripes of foam. As darkness quickly enveloped the schooner, all that stood out of the dark were these stripes of foam. In the sudden rearing above the breakwater of a new white crest, in the body of the wave zigzagged with patterns of spume, was all that remained to make Andrew sure it was the ocean itself around him.

The water seemed solid in that darkness. The boom of its fall was loud. But the interval of hissing escape of a fallen breaker shortened. It seemed but a matter of seconds before the next one was combing down out of the sky. The deck shuddered with each blow, and the hull righted and twisted under his feet. The ocean laid the cards on the table with a thunderous fist. The game between Andrew and the ocean was coming to a call.

Andrew knew what the night was to be. He knew what the barometer had shown. He had seen the first marks of the storm at full power.

The rain had ceased, and the wind blew with redoubled force, with cold barbs out of the Northeast that ate through Andrew's clothes, and sent its chill against his chest, his stomach and his legs.

Whenever he could, Andy would work his way toward the after part of the ship, and shout words of en-

couragement to Francelle. By now, the storm seemed to have become a monotony to her, and no shrill scream of the wind to higher pitch was new. She was not frightened by it, and she watched all that Andrew was doing, when she could see him through the spray. A cry of satisfaction would occasionally come from her when Andrew made a specially good shot at a wavering pile.

It had not been dark long before Andrew knew, from the movement of the hull, that if the storm continued, the ship would be off by morning. Sometimes the hull was buoyed nearly upright before she listed over on her side again under the impact of a wave.

To win or lose the schooner . . . this night. The hour would come this night when it would all be decided. Andrew found himself saving his strength, for the long day's labor had begun to spoil his aim. When he was not swinging his sledge, the muscles in his arm twitched and jumped. Across his shoulders, that's where the tired feeling began to run. He had a throbbing ache directly between his shoulders, and at his waist a weak feeling—as though the sea might snatch away the top part of his body from his legs. Oh, it tried to! Often it washed up around Andy and he lost control of his arms and legs. Then—just by good fortune—he'd catch his balance again.

At about ten o'clock, just after a wave nearly swept him overboard, sledge and all, Andrew decided he needed food. So with Francelle, he had an hour below. Even though the stovepipe was plugged, he decided to

kindle a fire, and have some hot coffee with ship's biscuit and tinned meat. He stayed in the bitter wood smoke in that galley, till the pot boiled the coffee down to a thick steaming syrup.

While he worked in the galley, Francelle took a turn at the pumps. When he came aft with the meal, both pumps were drawing suds and the bilge was dry again.

Over their meal together in the swaying cabin, it was hard indeed for Andrew to imagine they were not far at sea, in the grip of a storm, riding it out with a sea anchor. The cabin lamp swung on its gimbals in true deep-sea style, and threw its waving shadow and light back and forth across Francelle's face.

The cabin was full of illusions. It was hard to remember that this life they had had together by the margin of the ocean was about to change, that the storm which would bring the dream true, had broken at last. Andrew and Francelle talked together about the gulls, and wondered how they were making out in their nests against the face of the cliff. Andrew recalled different trees at the head of the Cove, several old gnarled pines in particular, that had become familiar sights against the landward sky. They wondered how they were making out, if this gale had finally pushed them over and dragged up their roots. Or whether they might have swayed low and escaped its force. . . .

Fortune acts so swiftly! These two were happy there together, and as food warmed in him, Andrew thought he heard a more reassured tone in Francelle's voice.

He grew confident of his own strength. Could he have expected that sudden turn, that followed almost

within an hour? If Andrew had thought soberly, he might have expected it, for both of them were too secure, too happy just to be together and drink warm coffee and nibble chunks from the hard bread while they talked of simple things.

After they were back on deck, the warmth of that time below stayed with Andrew, and made his legs active and fresh again, and his arms strong when finally the ship began to loosen! Ah, but the cold. . . .

Back on deck, with Francelle safely lashed by the wheel box, it seemed more certain than ever that soon would come a huge wave that would lift the schooner entirely free.

Almost any minute they might expect it from the wild lurchings the deck gave with each new impact. Ha! She was coming off all right, the sand was letting go!

But the cold! The veering wind struck now from the North, with a bitter howl that rattled every loose piece of rigging into a wild tattoo against the mast. Andy rammed the long wrists of his woolen gloves further up his sleeves.

Fortunately he had bought a dozen pairs of gloves in that drunken orgy of buying at Gifford with McGinnis so long ago. For the sting and burn of the sledge haft in Andrew's hand needed the relief of gloves every once in a while. His bare hands would hold out only fifteen minutes at a stretch. Then the cold would turn them so numb he had to get the gloves from Francelle or run the risk of losing his sledge.

With the gloves, of course, the sledge was still

clumsy to handle, but the joints of his fingers would slowly warm up and loosen under that protection. He could feel the tingling ache coming back into his hands, and he would know they had not frozen.

Up the masts several times Andrew thought he caught the glisten of ice. But it was so hard to see in all that darkness. He could not tell. Surely it was growing cold enough for ice to form.

Ever since the storm had drowned the clanging of the bell buoy, Andrew had had no reminder of the sea outside until he noticed a pale flash of purple light. The first time he saw it, Andy thought it was only in his eyes. Exhaustion might be signaling up through his body that way. But he saw it a second time not long after, and it seemed to stay in the sky for a greater length of time. He put it down to the North wind and the cold. Probably some curious electrical disturbance in the sky, like the St. Elmo's fire he had seen cluster around the masts of a ship once in the Pacific.

The wildness of that storm was in itself unbelievable enough to excuse anything else. Andrew thought no more about it, though he saw the purple light several times again.

He kept on visiting Francelle, for she seemed to be growing restless. Several times she asked him to change the ropes around her. Finally had them so loose he felt he must keep an eye on her whenever a lull offered the chance.

She said: "The spray does not seem cold now."

Andy saw her teeth in a white smile as she looked up at him.

As soon as they were clear of the bar, Andrew would persuade her to go below and get some sleep.

At any rate, she did not want to go below now. And it was practically certain that when the ship came free, she would be needed at the wheel, while he handled the sails. And then—if he failed—what slim chance for human life there might be in that wild surf would be hers. If she were below, there would be nothing she could do, a certain trap.

Then . . . all of a sudden it happened.

Andrew was glancing aft from where he stood, forward. Francelle's lashing had become loosened. She was standing clear of her blankets and the lashings he had put around her. The loosened knots had come untied, and the new rope had quickly kinked up in a snarl.

She was looking directly at the onsweeping crests, utterly fascinated by the sound of their rushing course through the air toward the ship. Several gigantic waves were swimming up out of the dark, just as Andrew saw her. In fact, he had been running his eye down the line of the ship just to reassure himself all was well before the decks were buried under the load of seething water.

Andrew did just exactly the one thing he could.

It was foolish to run aft. The heaving deck, the boiling surge of those broken waves would sweep him off in a flash. It was too far to go. Here was Andy—

arrested in his aim at a pile top! His sledge over his head.

He yelled—for Francelle to catch hold of something. Perhaps she would not hear, even though he timed his call to the moment before the wave broke, when there was a slight abating of the wind.

He did the one possible thing— There she was standing clear out in the dark near the wheel, her white duck trousers marked her out.

Andrew cried out, with the sledge high over his head. "Go below!"

Just as the wave swam up to crest, with all this thinking done in a moment's time—he swung the sledge down with full force.

It was pure habit. He had been working like a machine for so many hours. The sledge came down squarely on the toe of his boot. His head had been turned—watching Francelle.

A white-hot pain shot up his leg. A venom, a speechless anger at the sea. He made a desperate attempt to attract Francelle's attention. He tried to call out in one flaming cry. But the pain seemed to choke the cry in his throat. And Francelle had heard Andrew's warning. She made the cabin hatch before the wave struck.

She could not hear Andrew's choked scream of pain, of anger at the ocean, of wild protest against an overhanging fate.

Andrew had seen men hurt on the deck before, writhing after a fall from the cross-trees. Now, when he was hurt, a swift recollection of that sight came back.

Choking in gasps between mouthfuls of salt water and air—he sank helpless into the seething water.

Then—slowly Andrew felt life again through the fierce pain in his broken foot. He found he was gripping a foremast halyard in his left hand. And in his right he gripped the splintered haft of the sledge. It had been a glancing blow on his foot and the sledge head had caromed from the rubber boot against the iron shroud plates and snapped off. The force in that blow had been enough to cut Andrew's foot off.

It was a full ten minutes before he could drag himself up on the halyard to a standing position, and view the whole deck. A light shone through the cabin porthole —Francelle was safe. She had turned up the cabin lantern. Somehow she had luckily made her way below. Now there was only the pain in his foot.

Andrew stood alone on the lurching deck of the *Polaris*, and inside his boot he felt a warmth less chill than sea water. Andrew knew it was blood.

With a fierce cry, he suddenly reached up to his head and flung his cap as hard as he could, straight in the face of an advancing wave.

Andrew hung to that halyard, now dazed, now shrieking till his throat hurt, now crying crazily with tears all over his face, for how long he couldn't tell.

All Andrew knew was that the storm went on, more loud than ever before, wave after wave bombing the deck, and his ship each time lurching freer and freer.

XXVI

A THOUSAND demon fingers flew past Andrew's bare head, wind was ice against his scalp. That wind came at him! It tried to shake the halyard out of his hand, the rope that held him up. It blew his ear flat against his cheek. If he turned his head, it did not let go, but flattened his ear against his skull. Andrew's ears were aching from the cold. Sometimes that wind would strike him full in the stomach, and nearly take all the breath out of him. If Andrew let go the halyard for ever so brief a moment—just to catch a new hold—the wind whipped it out of his reach, and his weight sank down on his crushed foot with electrical pain that blinded him and made him sick.

Oh, God! That sickness, that failing in the stomach —that was almost too much for Andrew to hold out against. Back of all the pain, smoldered the anger at the ocean for his pain. The cold, the tricks the gale worked on him . . . Before, Andy could conquer these with a strong heart. But now, through his foot, they had cut the ground out beneath him, and left him querulous before their slightest assault.

Andrew now was enraged at an ocean which had a thousand ways to cut back at him with little strokes, to provoke him, and defeat him. In all that roar, with the world so unreal, what wonder he felt no joy at Francelle's safety till so much later? All Andrew felt

was that consuming, futile anger against pain, against cold, against the ocean. It was that speechless anger, the inability to answer back that saved him from giving up utterly, from letting the ship go. If the wind had dropped into a lull for even a short time, perhaps it would have come out differently. Perhaps Andy would have been crushed out, like a loose beam from wreckage, and thrown somewhere on the sand.

The more he tried to move about, the more increased this fury in him. Andrew was so helpless, here at the moment when his ship was coming free. What could he do to further and assist these wild lurches the ship made under the attack of the waves? His sledge was gone. And he would not trust himself to go below for an ax. Francelle could not hear him if he called.

It was all so close, he reasoned, that he doubted if any more work on the breakwater would count. He would have such a short while to make sail and get away. He had better trust to what work he had done, and that the breakwater would hold together until he was free.

Andrew started clearing the gear he needed, freeing the mainsail halyards, and taking the heavy stops off the mainsail. The deck was a hard place for him to get around on now, with its sudden lurches up against his uncertain foot. Stays, cleats, braces, he had to remember where all these were so that his good foot would always be ready to find a clear space to hold firm the body above it. Except when his crushed foot caught in one of these cleats on the deck, its pain was bearable.

Either Andy was becoming used to the pain, or the cold had numbed the torn flesh. He couldn't put much weight on that foot, but he could hold out against caving in flat in a heap on the deck.

Certainly the breakwater had done its work! Andrew had more time to look around now that his movements were restricted. He could not see the shore through the spray, but directly ahead of the ship, the waves after they had broken seemed now to be reforming and cresting further ahead still. This would mean a deep gash out in the bar.

In the air to seaward Andrew again noticed the bluish light, very high up, it seemed, and disconnected from the earth. Andrew thought of the revolving light four miles down the coast. Maybe through some freak in clear upper air with the wind shifting Northward, its rays would be visible in the sky from the Cove. But it was growing so much brighter. . . .

Then, as he was looking at this light, Andrew suddenly found the whole sky shut off by a black wall. Instinctively he wrapped a turn of rope around his waist, and caught a fresh grip on the rail, as tight as he could. He turned his back to the on-coming wave, for he knew what was in store—he half guessed the size of this huge comber, nearly twice as high as its predecessors. As fast as he could, Andrew worked his way up into the shrouds, lifting himself hand by hand to help out the useless foot. He was more than half way between the deck and the mast spreaders when the giant wave struck.

Up in the rigging, every lurch Andrew had felt on

deck was multiplied many times. The mast travelled a greater arc with each side swing. Twice Andrew was nearly snapped off by the sharp recovery, but he caught his hold again before it was too late.

Andrew was nearly level with the top of the comber, just as the spray from its smoking top struck across the mast and stung his face. It was one of those giant waves a prolonged storm inevitably raises. Curiously, unexplainably, they sweep up out of the depths of the outer ocean and come towering in toward the shore, gradually rising higher and higher till they overbalance—curl and break.

How that wave slid up to the schooner! It seemed to suddenly slow its driving course and send all its energy into a quivering upward thrust of its huge mass. It might be too much for the deck, the weight of those tons of water. It might crush everything in its path if it struck directly downward on the frail shadowy outline of the schooner below. Andrew saw it all coming as he waited, and he counted the chances. At first it seemed certain that the schooner was done for. She would lie directly beneath that huge white crest when it collapsed.

Then came that breathless moment when the course of the wave seemed mysteriously arrested, like a ship that had grounded on a bar. It swung upward with an indecisive swaying of its giant mass.

The report of that wave's collapse reëchoed like a shot. Andrew felt the rush of air, and shut his eyes while he gripped the jerking shroud with his last strength. He didn't breathe during the interval after

that first crash of the wave's toppled height. Then he looked below in time to see the broken mass appear to bound upward, then fall again in a murderously swirling pile of confused water.

If Andrew had been on that deck, he would have been as dead as a stone.

Then suddenly the mast swung him far outward. . . . The ship heeled to her absolute beam ends, and hung quivering while that broken water seethed and worked its way clear.

Andrew could not look to see if other waves were following, he thought of nothing, only that the schooner might at last go over and fill—and the game be wholly finished.

Oh, he listened, hanging way out there over the water, for the first fatal wrenching loose of a plank, the first crack of the leaning mast, that might snap like a toothpick and drop him into that caldron of black water and foam.

Then there were sudden sharp tugs against his hands on the stay, as though the ship were bumping over deep ruts, hitting boulders. In what must have been but a moment's time the second wave broke. But it seemed to Andrew the *Polaris* hung over at that perilous angle for an hour.

The second wave was not so large as the first, and that was the wave that washed the ship clear. . . .

It struck her a terrific blow, straight against her upturned bottom. The force of it all but catapulted Andy out of his insecure hold in the rigging. But the thrill that his ship was at last coming free gave his

arms a superhuman strength, and he hung on. . . . The third wave followed, still smaller and cresting further from the ship. The *Polaris* was moving!

Gradually Andrew sensed the meaning of that fact. He had been stunned by the sudden rising of these waves, all his strength had gone into the breathless moments when he had barely held his grip, and he was slow to actually believe what he saw.

The mast began to right gradually, and the hull take on the heave of the waves. At last the up and down plunging came into the motion of the *Polaris,* the feeling of a free ship working her own way through the seas. Plainly under bare poles, with the wind coming more and more from the Northward, and the tide ebbing, the *Polaris* would slowly work toward the center of the Cove. Down the shore, truly, and deeper in from the entrance she must eventually clear—but nevertheless into open water.

Andrew worked his way down the shrouds as fast as he could. He must get sail on her or she would broach-to. She would roll dangerously in the foaming troughs of the wide running seas. Andy saw her bow swing slowly. There was not a minute to lose.

His foot struck the deck again, and there was a necessary slight weight on it as he worked his way around the mainsail to get the peak free. The pain shot back into his leg with arrowy keenness. He forced himself deliberately to press down on that foot. He hung on to the main boom while the dizziness passed, and he could see again. The foot felt better once more, and Andrew was able to go on with his work of clearing the sail.

As he worked with the canvas, Andy wondered about the bargain he had made for it. Perhaps after all, the canvas would split, and carry away when the wind filled it out taut in full strain. It was old canvas, such a foolhardy thing to do—put all the success of his plan into the folds of rotted canvas! What else could he have done? He could not have bought any other sails with the money he had—he was lucky to have found these. So, he must simply reef down to but a small triangle. Then let that serve as a small storm sail to give him steerage way to beat out of the Cove, or hold his own inside its mouth until the wind fell off. Under bare poles, or a sea anchor even, Andrew would slowly drift back into the Cove, and drive hard and fast aground again. He had to have sail. If his sails split, that was the end.

With heart beating, Andrew loosened the stops, and cleared the boom. He ran up that small rag of sail into this wind, his answer to the ocean for all it had done against him. With short surges, he had the sail up. It filled in an instant, and went taut with a jerk that shivered the masts.

Andrew hurriedly spun the spokes of the wheel, and let the bow fall off a point or two to ease the terrific strain. Oh, what a feeling to see that plunging bow swing in answer to the turn of the wheel.

Then, above all the roar of the storm, Andrew felt the schooner lunge ahead. He heard the curl of parted water as it swept back from the bow. The *Polaris* was sailing.

XXVII

WITH an extra heavy roll, the main boom snapped off short.

Andrew cut away the gear and set it adrift. With a reefed foresail and jib, he managed to keep steerage way on the schooner all through the night.

Every time a heavy gust heeled the ship on her beam ends and her deck was buried in foam half way across, he feared that bargain foresail would let go like an old handkerchief, and a few strips be left flapping. But as soon as the *Polaris* crested the comber, he would ease off the helm and she would round up. Oh, that bow of hers! That was what saved the hull that night, beating about in the mouth of the Cove, fighting for a chance to break through the high combers and run free down the coast.

Andy had seen yachts with an overhanging bow—Mr. Shinhosler's yacht showed it in her picture—but they seemed flat underneath, like a long spoon stuck out, giving speed of course, but in a heavy seaway only a blunt pounding and smashing down on the water underneath. The beauty of the *Polaris* was that her bow tapered in at the cutwater, and she sliced her course straight through the seas ahead. All that night Andrew kept her bow pointed up into those dark smoking hillocks of water that drove down on the schooner out of the sky.

He sat there by the wheel, scarcely feeling the burning throb of his foot, and kept his arm up over the wheel, working out toward the sea gradually.

But the purple light in the sky. . . . Andrew had discovered the meaning of that. It was a small steamer, and the bluish light was from her searchlight.

Andy wondered about that steamer while he sat by the wheel.

Why was a steamer so stationary? Throughout the storm her position could hardly have shifted a mile. Andrew saw the light almost steady against the sky when the schooner was lifted to a crest top. Whatever in hell could that fellow be doing?

He had better make for Gifford Harbor. The seas off Shark Cove were no place to linger. If that steamer kept her position till dawn, Andy would find out more about her, that was sure. He'd have a chance to look her over, for his course would lie close to hers when he made the long tack outward to get a lead on the jutting coast line. He would see what she was about.

And with these speculations in his mind, and the continued worry about the old canvas when a gust struck down, the night slowly passed. The wind moderated slightly with the first lightening up of the sky.

Andrew determined to make the run out just as soon as that wind slacked. He had no love for staying longer so near a lee shore, with the chance that his sails would strip to ribbons, and the hull be washed back up on the beach. With the slackening wind, he could let his foresail come in closer, and trim the jib flat. They

had stood the strain of that long night, surely now with a moderating wind they would hold the strain of that long tack out of the Cove.

And so Andrew rose from his long watch at the wheel, and stretched his cramped arms and stiff legs. The wind howled still, but with a lightening sky, the adventure outward seemed somehow to be safer. Oh, the light can fool a man! Just because it is light, that does not mean mountainous seas will dwindle in an hour, seas piled up through a two-day gale. No, and because the sky grows light in the East, it does not mean that old canvas sails are tougher. But then—that light seemed to mean the end of an intolerably long fear. The night was over, the dying embers of Andrew's anger at the sea—all these abated falsely in that early light.

Man could not sustain feeling at the pitch that had carried Andrew through. He cannot imagine the endurance of the ocean! And, kindly deluded by dawn, Andy's heart beat up proudly in his chest. He saw the outline of his ship coming out of the dark, and he saw clearly how she was shouldering the seas. During the dark night her struggle up through a burden of overhanging water had seemed miraculous. Now, in the light, he could see how the schooner was doing her work, how neatly she drove her way up and over.

Before Andy at last decided to trim sail for the long tack outward, he swung the wheel down and let her have an eyeful of wind. She took it as a blooded horse takes the lifted rein. She sped like a rocket. An-

drew swung her up into the wind, thrilled with the way she handled, and trimmed down those sails.

He would slip past that wallowing steamer like a shot, once the schooner gathered her speed.

He would be out of that damned Shark Cove!

And look what he had done! How far he had gone from a life only a dead man would surrender with misgivings! He had left an insecure livelihood in a world where jobs are always fewer than men. Now—here he was, with his own ship! A free man!

It was unnecessary for Andrew to receive the smooth wisecracks of that telephone operator in the office. He no longer had to listen while Mr. Shinhosler told him how he started the business and won that first account. Nor need he listen again to Symes droning out numbers of loss files. And the few things he used to like about the office—they were dry now. Ah, how dry were those phrases that had once been exciting to read, "from perils of the sea, and from sinking, burning, stranding, or in collision" . . . It was all so far back.

Even the freezing air was friendly now as Andrew bent low over the sheet ropes, taking up an extra bight. Sail close-hauled? He would trim her flat. The ship did not leak, she was tough and sound, let her fly!

And so Andy returned to the wheel, and let the ship fall off till she finally snatched the wind full in her sails. The rolling stopped, and she heeled low in the water, ominously. Then with a gathering momentum, the *Polaris* started to drive ahead.

Andrew was off!

Perhaps he would sail straight past Gifford, and round up for New York. It would not be long before he passed the bell buoy at this rate. Sheets of spray flew up mast high as the schooner swung up into a crest and pitched forward down the further slope. Andrew was off, and in an hour, with the sun—that grim cold would relent, and give his aching muscles rest. The darkness of the long night would pass, and warm sun break through and fall on an ocean still heaving and covered with froth, while it slowly settled to more usual movement.

Andrew lost all thought of his sails, and the chance that they might rip. He held his wheel hard up to the last spoke, boldly. The slim craft shot forward as every sea released her. Francelle—he fell to thinking of Francelle. In the distracting joy and excitement of the moment it was hard to keep the image of her face in his mind. Ever since the schooner had come free, he had not had a moment to go below. He wondered whether Francelle was frightened down below in the cabin. From the sounds of the water rushing by, from the motion of the ship, she would realize that they were under way. Or—she might have fallen asleep—from exhaustion and cold. He could not go below to find out now. He couldn't leave the wheel for an instant. . . .

Suddenly the schooner rose up to the peak of a lofty crest. Andrew's reflections about Francelle were abruptly broken. For there, not a quarter of a mile away, Andrew saw the steamer that had been lying off the Cove since the day before.

At first he thought she was a menhaden boat, from her forward mast rigged like a seine derrick. But her tall smoke stack was set further amidships than a fisherman. Andy made out the shine of her sidelights, still burning, in the thin gray light of early dawn.

He saw her high bow lift slowly into the air as a wave rolled up under her. Then she sank out of view in a gulf.

The clangs of the bell buoy were at last clear. Bang! bang! those hammers fell as the great seas tilted and swung the little bell frame high and low. Andrew wondered about that steamer . . . then, it came to him. Of course, she was not a trawler.

She was a sea-going tug, with her stack forward of her poop and her high steel bow. She was a wrecking tug, with all that gear on her foremast. . . .

Hard by the bell buoy was an excellent place for a wrecker, she could keep her position by circling slowly around the low clanging of its hammers on the bell.

Some one lost on the coast, Andy thought, as the *Polaris* sped up on a line with the tug. Oh, his heart beat stronger when he knew how staunch his hull had held. He almost laughed into the rushing wind that peppered his face with spray. He looked at the tug every time a crest pushed him up, and she was in view.

Each time Andrew saw her, he gave the wheel an extra yank, to press a further burst of speed from the schooner. Let those fellows on that wrecking tug have one good look at a schooner that was not afraid! That could sail!

Those men on board that tug, with powerful engines slowly beating under them, waiting to pick up whatever derelict they sought—they need not be so damned superior! Ah, that great steel bow the tug had, rising dripping from the ocean, her plates shining in the first red beams of the sun shot low over the water—that was machinery, that was business! The belching column of smoke Andy suddenly saw rise twisting up out of her stack—all that was what he had left!

Andrew fancied the schooner she was waiting for—probably some stubborn skipper was hereabouts who would not signal distress—and they, by the laws of salvage, would have no profit till he should. Oh, that law of salvage: "The commander must indicate absolute distress."

His heart allied with that skipper, wherever he was! Andrew gripped the wheel spokes tight in an angry sympathy for him, a defiance of that huge steel bow, that hung dripping, so complacent, so sure of itself, with the powerful engines turning slowly, in perfect control.

Andrew saw the figures of several men on the bridge of the wrecker. The *Polaris* was coming closer. Oh, those devils had had a good sleep through the storm! Andy fancied their breakfast—a steak maybe and coffee with cream! Now they had deigned to come on deck for a look at the weather. Ho! Ho! Andrew hoped they found it very chill up there on the canvas-sheltered bridge that had been swept clean by spray all night.

They were the men to make money out of wrecks,

men like that! Oh, they would save the owners a loss, surely. They would save some money by towing in a dismasted wrecked schooner that was laboring in the ocean near by. They would make their money on some vessel captained by a tired skipper who had to give in, some skipper who would not submit to the wreck of his ship, but would choose instead to wreck his soul, and signal absolute distress.

Andy would toss that dismasted schooner a line if he saw her.

She must be stripped clear to her decks if she was near, or he would have seen her surely. And there was that big bastard of a wrecking tug swinging slowly around the bell buoy, keeping her position in safe distance from it. Oh, she'd not pile up on the shore! Her crew would eat from china plates, and her officers would drink their coffee from cups in a steam-heated cabin.

When they picked up that helpless schooner finally, they would be kind to her skipper. Oh, yes, that was good business. It would help them when it came to settling accounts with her owners, if the captain should give a good report. They'd give him hot whiskey and lemon juice, and wrap him in warm blankets. They'd stow him away in a soft-mattressed bunk, and tell him to sleep—now he could do no more.

Andrew luffed in the wind, and hung rolling among the dangerous crests while he shook out a reef from the foresail. The sun was coming up! Soon its light would glitter over this savage black water, and make it warm again. He would try a little more sail.

Andrew let her have the increased sail slowly, he fed her the wheel gradually, and she took it like a thoroughbred. Ah, he glanced down the gleaming deck, with all those seams in narrow black lines where he had paid in the pitch and oakum so patiently under a hot summer sun. It was so long ago, that time. . . . And long ago too, when he had eaten last at Mrs. Spielfogel's. . . .

Some deep, primal instinct in Andrew knew a great glory that made him radiant at the feeling of his ship sailing that way in the early morning. The red sun shone on her, and the tigered waves surged about. The wind was sweeping in over his head from so far out. . . . Andrew would never forget all these things. Nor how he thought to turn from the wheel to thumb his nose at the captain of the wrecker.

XXVIII

ANDREW'S schooner was so beautiful in the rising sun, and he so sure of her perfection!

But perhaps you have laid an open jack-knife in the palm of your hand, thoughtfully, then suddenly snapped shut the blade and put it in your pocket? Well, when this good fortune of Andrew's luck broke, it was as quick as that.

He had sailed hardly a hundred yards with the increased canvas, when there was a dreadful instant of ripping and tearing. The first glance showed Andrew the few shreds of madly whipping canvas that were left.

His sail had blown out!

Slowly Andy's mind took in the meaning of this disaster. The mainsail had gone when the boom snapped off short during the early maneuvers. So there the schooner was, with a staunch hull, wallowing helplessly in the cresting seas, her decks heaving more wildly as she swung into the deadly trough.

Andrew looked up, and in a moment of clear view, he saw a wisp of steam gather at the smokestack of the wrecker. It thickened into a plume that was caught flat by the wind. After a moment, the *Polaris* sank into a hollow and the wrecker was invisible again, Andrew heard the low roar of her hoarse whistle. She had seen Andrew's distress.

God, she had laid in wait like a hawk! Like a dirty gull at the turn of the tide waits for the fish to grow confused! The smoke Andrew had seen belching upward a few minutes before was explained—they had seen the end coming, they had fired up their boilers then. When he thought of that, Andrew suddenly noticed he could no longer see clearly. Something was wrong with his eyes. A pain traveled straight up his leg into the pit of his stomach, like a jagged fork of lightning. Everything was bright with an unearthly radiance. Andrew heard the continuing roar of the whistle in swaying notes of clearness with the varying force of the wind that carried it. He heard the steady clanging of the bell buoy, banging, banging—would it ever stop! God damn it!

Andy tightened his fist up with all his strength. He must do something to kill this pain, to stop the noise of that bell. He staggered to his feet—out of these rags that were left he would somehow make a sail. But he couldn't see, and there was pain! He dropped crouching against the wheel box to gather the last strength left him with closed eyes. . . . A wild strange woman who could cook, whose body he loved, whose soul was her own—he would lose her. Without the ship what use had he for a cook? Now—Andy repeated to his dazed brain—now his staunch ship was going. The wrecker would take her. Utterly disabled!

Christ, it was better to sink!

With this one idea in mind, Andrew struggled to his feet, to make for the cabin. If once he could get down

there, he would open the sea-cocks, pull out the bilge plugs—

The pain would stop if he could only lie down. Maybe he would even be able to go back on deck for another try. Surely once in the cabin his eyes would see again—this black, blurred sense of objects, clear away. He must rest! If he failed then, he would be near the bilge plugs. Oh, he must reach that cabin, with its strip of red carpet, and with the mattressed bunk. He could think there. It would be like going home. He had been happy in that cabin.

Andrew staggered forward again toward the hatch. He called Francelle.

The schooner suddenly careened. Andrew felt himself go—he knew he had lost his balance. As he sprawled on the deck, with that unbearable pain gripping straight up his leg into his stomach, he knew what was happening. He rose to his elbow and clutched a rope's end. With his last strength he held on. He felt his head roll loose on his shoulders, as though it were not his head. He kept calling to Francelle, and beating the deck with his fists. Then he sank down slowly, relaxing bit by bit, gradually losing sense of everything about him, forgetting, the pain growing more dull, and noises far off. The bell buoy was the last thing Andrew heard, the everlasting clanging those four swinging hammers made . . .

XXIX

WELL, nearly any canvas would have blown out under the strain Andrew had put on those sails. But his bargain yet turned out to be a good bargain.

For when Andrew had bought the old canvas, the fisherman had thrown in two topsails that were fairly new. The fisherman never had use for them, his stumpy craft carried no topmasts. It was these that Francelle remembered when she came on deck, awakened first from a fitful sleep by the suddenly interrupted motion of their sailing, then by Andrew's calling. As the wrecker cruised up near them, and her skipper hailed through a megaphone, she went over to Andrew and shook his limp shoulders.

Andrew summoned the last bit of will that was in him to pull back out of the comfortable void of unconsciousness. It was Francelle, he realized slowly, who would not let him alone. At first he had thought it was some one from the wrecker. She lifted him up by the shoulders, and kept calling something. Sails . . . The topsails . . . ! Finally Andy understood.

The sun was shining. The morning was deepening into day.

With her own hands she lugged those topsails out of the lazaret below. In the interval of her absence from the deck, a fearful impatience began to seize An-

drew. If she were too late . . . the hull was careening madly in the trough of the waves, now carried to a dizzy height, now dropped with deadening swiftness into the valley. It was during these moments when Francelle was below, that Andrew's eyes finally cleared, and he could see plainly again, without that mist about everything.

The schooner was shipping cascades of water at every plunge. They could work only intermittently between waves. Meanwhile the wrecker stood by, her propellers whirling the air as her stern lifted out of water.

Andrew and Francelle together bent those topsails on, fore and aft, to serve in place of the blown-out canvas, Francelle and Andrew. Oh, Francelle was a good comrade! She forgot everything—her fear, herself—everything but the feverish haste of her fingers in the snarled rope.

And finally they had the new sails in place, and made fast to the halyards, and hoisted.

Oh, the feeling of that old hull slowly gaining steerage way again!

Slowly rounding into the wind, and the crazy beaten foam astern gradually straightening into a wake. The *Polaris,* sailing again!

Francelle held the wheel with Andrew, as they shaped the course down the coast. There was one goal in Andrew's mind. New York!

Once there—once he had seen the skyline from his own deck—then there would be time for sleep, and food, and rest. That thought held him up. In his

fevered brain, it gradually became an immense obsession. Andy had thumbed his nose at the wrecker. From the deck of his own ship he would thumb his nose at New York! Suddenly it had become more important than anything else. He had become accustomed this quickly to the actual sailing of his ship. . . .

Andrew stayed by the wheel. From time to time Francelle brought up coffee and ship's biscuit. She put a crude bandage on his foot, and washed the wound clean with salt water. When she did that, Andrew fainted, but all the while the dream of sailing into New York harbor would return. It was like the obsession of a drunken man.

The *Polaris* sailed easily with her improvised storm canvas. She had the sea abaft her beam, and a wind that was almost following. Andrew tried to teach Francelle how to handle the wheel, and control the yawing of the bow as the day wore on, and the seas slowly lowered. He felt sleep relentlessly overtaking him. And his foot throbbed, tightening under Francelle's bandage so that she had to loosen it several times.

In the afternoon, she brought up blankets, and after trying to persuade Andy to make in toward the coast, and find a harbor, begged him to fall asleep, to let go. She could surely handle the wheel in the quieting sea.

Andrew let her try it more often. Gradually she took the spokes from Andy's hands altogether, and, astride the wheel box, was handling the schooner alone. After another hour of watching, Andy slipped off into a

light doze, waking now and then when Francelle let the ship get away from her. . . .

When Andrew suddenly came wide awake at a sharp twinge in his foot, he had been dreaming they were anchored in the Lower Bay of New York, and it was night. Andrew could see the myriad lights of the tall buildings. He glanced up. It was the stars he saw. It was truly night, but they were far at sea, making way slowly down the coast under the easing breeze.

Francelle was standing there above, by the wheel. For a moment Andy said nothing about the pain in his foot. He kept quiet and watched Francelle. She had her eye on the weather clew of the dim sail, and slowly moved the wheel back and forth. There she was, and she was a comrade. She could hold her own at the wheel. Andrew knew then that they could sail the schooner anywhere together. When they became hard up for cash they could pick up a coast-wise cargo. Andy saw the future brightly weaving itself out.

As he lay there in the blankets, he seemed to live over again all his life. How he had been striving all the time for this thing he now had, how even when he did not know it, something in him had been striving for it. You could strive for freedom and never win it. But you could strive for the vehicle of freedom and not be swallowed up in failure. . . .

Like an animal who has found good grazing, now Andrew knew he was in the right place. He felt that contentment in the security of his ship and her easy roll and pitch with the swells.

He remembered the first voyage he had made, long ago, how a queer feeling had come into his heart when they were finally pointed for home again. And how the crew fell to singing the old chanteys . . . *Rolling Home* . . . the tune came slowly back to him. In an odd way, Andrew was rolling home. Not to any place so much as to a kind of rest for his spirit, a home for that which had always worked in him, and made the longing for his ship. Returning to New York would make it all seem sure. This ship he had built out of the sand with his own hands. In a few nights, her sails would be snugly stowed, she would be riding at anchor in the Bay, a slight silhouette against the glow of that skyline, but how much to him! Rolling Home, yes it was true. The old feeling he had had on that first voyage, but now in such a new way.

Without thinking Andrew fell to humming the chantey.

Francelle bent and looked down at him. Andrew reached for her hand on the wheel spoke. In his heart the song went on, as old songs do, quietly, over again.

A thin moon slowly showed over the far horizon, and threw its light toward the small schooner. Over the vast overshadowed ocean, in the light of that sea moon, an ancient form was complete—a man and his ship.